

## U.S. vetoes new resolution

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United States on Friday used its Security Council veto for the second time in two weeks to prevent adoption of a resolution calling on Israel to halt a settlement construction in Arab East Jerusalem. U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said that the adoption of the draft resolution by the Security Council was "inappropriate" following a Friday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. Mr. Richardson told journalists here that his delegation "will be voting no" on the short Arab-sponsored resolution. "We think it's inappropriate to be taking a vote like this in light of the horrendous terrorist act that happened in Israel today," he said. "We feel that this was a tragedy and it's inappropriate for the council to be acting."

# Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily, founded by the Jordan Press Foundation  
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي

## King thanks Qatari emir for aid

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday sent a message to the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, thanking him for his contribution of \$2 million to Dar Al Bir, the orphanage at Al Hashemiyeh Palace. King Hussein voiced appreciation of Sheikh Hamad's contribution and wished him continued good health and happiness and the Qatari people further progress and prosperity. Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national carrier, announced on March 7 an in-kind contribution of domestic appliances, blankets and clothes to the institutions caring for orphans and handicapped. The contribution, which came from RJ staff, was made in response to the King's call on Jordanians to care for its orphans. The Amman Chamber of Commerce has announced a donation of JD 25,000 for the same cause. The Arab Sanitary Paper Converting Company (Soft) and Nuqul Brothers, manufacturers of fine sanitary tissues, have pledged lifetime, in-kind donations to Dar Al Bir, including diapers, paper tissues and other paper products.

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## Suicide blast kills 4 in Tel Aviv

Israel and PNA trade charges of direct or indirect responsibility

### Arafat calls Weizman, Netanyahu to decry attack; security chiefs from both sides meet

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — A suicide bomber blew himself up Friday in an outdoor cafe filled with merry-makers costumed for the Jewish holiday of Purim. Police said four people including bomber were killed and 47 wounded in the explosion claimed by Palestinian militants.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) quickly condemned the bombing but blamed Israel's hardline policies for leading up to the blast.

"We condemn the killing of civilians in Tel Aviv, whatever the reason or the motive or the forces that are behind it," said the self-rule cabinet head Ahmad Abdul Rahman within an hour of the attack.

"The firm Palestinian position is that we condemn and detest any act of violence aimed at civilians," he said. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat telephoned Israeli President Ezer Weizman to condemn the attack and tried but was unable to reach Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The suicide bomber, a suspected Palestinian militant, and two Israelis, a man and a woman, were killed in the cafe explosion which also injured 47 people. Mr. Netanyahu accused Mr. Arafat of holding "a great responsibility" for the blast after giving a "green light" to militants to carry out



A victim's body is taken away from the wreckage of a Tel Aviv cafe after an apparent suicide bombing on Friday that killed four people including the bomber (Reuters photo)

new bombings and other attacks against Israel in response to the start of construction this week of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Mr. Abdul Rahman denied the accusation, calling it "a baseless charge made for political reasons." "President Arafat had done all that is in his power to keep security and stability and has called the Palestinians to be calm," he said. "It is Netanyahu who has pushed the peace process to the edge of the abyss. He is responsible for the results which the peace process has come to, he is the one who has struck blow after blow against the peace process," he said.

Mr. Arafat, in his call to Mr. Weizman, echoed the charge that Israel was to blame for the attack by insisting on building the so-called "Har Homa" settlement, according to Mr. Arafat's spokesman Marwan Kanafani. "It is sad that the measures Israel has taken have moved the Israeli and Palestinian peoples out of the atmosphere of cooperation we saw after the (January) Hebron accord and to the distressing point which we saw today in Tel Aviv and Hebron," Mr. Arafat told Mr. Weizman. Mr. Arafat was referring to clashes which occurred earlier Friday in the West Bank city of Hebron, where Palestinian protesters threw

stones at Israeli soldiers who responded with tear gas. Several people were injured in the melee, mostly by gas. "We condemn the violence which occurred today in Tel Aviv and in Hebron," Mr. Arafat said in the call. Imad Faluji, an Islamist member of Mr. Arafat's government considered close to the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), put the blame for the deaths directly on Israel. "Israel bears the responsibility for any incident. We advised them many times to halt settlement activity. We hope that Israel comes to its senses and the peace process continues," he said.

(Continued on page 7)

## Jordan condemns bombing

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan on Friday condemned a bomb attack in a Tel Aviv cafe that claimed the lives of at least three people and left dozens wounded.

An official spokesman, quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said: "Acts of violence and terrorism do not serve the cause of peace, but undermine all efforts made to resume the peace process and put it back on track."

"Jordan has always opposed all forms of terrorism and the killing of civilians because such actions question the people's right to live in security and stability," said the spokesman, calling for self-restraint and stressing the need to deal with Friday's incident patiently.

"Acts of violence and their consequences should not influence or undermine efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace for all peoples in the region, a goal which a majority of the region supports," added the spokesman.

Minister of State for Information Samir Mutawe', in comments carried by the French news agency, Agence France Presse, said: "We denounce all forms of violence... especially if they are aimed at innocent civilians."

Jordan rejects "terrorism and the killing of civilians and innocent people," he told AFP.

## King heads for U.S. after instructing security forces to be alert against infiltrators

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor on Friday left Amman for the United States for a visit during which King Hussein will meet President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials.

King Hussein is also expected to undergo a medical checkup at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota before meeting Mr. Clinton in Washington on March 28. The King and Queen were seen off by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath and other members of the Royal family as well as Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Cabinet members and high-ranking officials and U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan.

The White House meeting was originally scheduled for March 18, but it did not take place because King Hussein decided to stay home and handle the aftermath of the death of seven Israeli schoolgirls shot dead by a Jordanian soldier last week.

The White House talks are expected to focus on the crisis in the Middle East peace process resulting from Israeli actions in Arab East Jerusalem.

King Hussein will also meet U.S. military officials to discuss Jordan's defence needs, officials said.

Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent before the King's departure.

On Thursday, King Hussein sent letters to the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i, and the heads of the Public Security, General Intelligence and Civil Defence departments cautioning them to be vigilant against infiltrators and again condemned last week's shooting rampage at Baqoura.

The attack was "a mark of shame" for the army, the King wrote, adding that the soldier's comrades should have moved to "kill him immediately."

"We do not betray people with whom we have made peace," he wrote. "We fight in honour and we make peace in honour."

King Hussein described the attack by the soldier as "a mark of shame on all of us, which will be erased by our determination to ensure that it is never repeated."

He added: "It is a mark of shame on all who were directly responsible for the perpetrator and all who saw him act and did not kill him immediately."

"Had his weapon not jammed, by the grace of God, his crime would have been all the more horrendous," said the King.

The soldier, Corporal Ahmad Dakamseh, 27, has been detained for questioning. He is expected to be tried before a military

court. Officials said Cpl. Dakamseh, a driver in the army, had no record of criminal or political activity. His family said he was mentally unstable.

King Hussein in his letter described the soldier as "a coward who sought to show manhood."

"Brothers, I urge you all to be vigilant to prevent any treacherous or hateful agents from infiltrating our ranks and to strike with our arms and to use our weapons against us," the King said.

"Brothers, on another matter, I inform you that I have given orders to rename the desert police, where the Arab Army was born, The Royal Desert Force. Its members who work in populated areas, and in keeping law and order, will continue under the command of the general security apparatus for the present, until the regiments of the Royal Desert Force/Border Guard are formed as part of the Arab Army — The Royal Jordanian Armed Forces — under whose command it will function, and which will be responsible for training, arming and supporting the force composed of our sons, the sons of the desert, so that they may fulfill their duties in protecting the borders of their country and other duties

(Continued on page 7)

## Majali reviews latest developments with Kaddoumi, reaffirms Jordan's support for Palestinian struggle

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Political Department Director Farouk Kaddoumi on Friday reviewed the latest developments in the Middle East peace process on the Palestinian track, including Israel's arbitrary measures in Arab East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied territories.

Dr. Majali reiterated Jordan's full support for the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights and affirmed that Jordan "will continue to make every possible effort to ensure the establishment of a just, comprehensive and durable peace on all tracks despite the obstacles and challenges," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Mr. Kaddoumi paid tribute to Jordan's stand and said the Jordanian support for the Palestinian people in "these difficult circumstances is crucial to enabling the Palestinian people enjoy their legitimate national rights."

Mr. Kaddoumi congratulated Dr. Majali on his assumption of office as prime minister.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister for Services Affairs and Minister of Administrative Development Abdullah Ensour and Minister of State for Information Samir Mutawe' as well as Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Al Khanib.

Continued support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their national rights is one of the key mandates given to Dr. Majali in His Majesty King

Hussein's letter of designation to the new prime minister.

On Thursday, Dr. Majali chaired the first meeting of his cabinet, which was sworn in on Wednesday, and pledged to carry out the King's directives on the internal and external fronts.

Speaking to the press after the Cabinet meeting, Dr. Majali said his government "will pursue the programmes initiated by the previous government in the reconstruction process."

He vowed to give "due attention to domestic affairs and finding appropriate solutions to internal problems, a task that will require significant efforts."

Dr. Majali said that "a change of government in Jordan is quite expected, in order to give the chance to new elements with different expertise and qualifications to participate in the reconstruction process and to achieve progress for Jordan."

Asked about his views regarding the general situation in the region, Dr. Majali said: "We are realistic and try to deal with matters with wisely and rationally." He said his government will focus attention on enhancing relations with Arab countries and achieving comprehensive peace to ensure stability and security in the region.

Earlier Dr. Majali, in an address to the Cabinet session, underlined the importance of ministers working in the spirit of a single and united team to implement the directives of His Majesty King Hussein in his letter of designation to the government.

He stressed that the new

government will exert its best efforts to improve services to the public and that the ministers will do their best to ensure progress and prosperity for the Kingdom.

He also announced that the Council of Ministers will continue to hold weekly meetings Tuesdays and Saturdays at eight in the evening.

Later Minister of State for Information Samir Mutawe' said that the government had drawn up a plan of action. "It is not a government of words, we have a clear programme with fixed objectives which we hope to carry out," Dr. Mutawe' said.

He said one of the main tasks of the government was to prepare for the next general elections which he said "gives (it) the character of being a transitional government, but we hope to continue to apply our programme which requires hard work."

Government strategies are set by the King, Dr. Mutawe' noted, and "therefore there is no change expected in the country's strategies but each government has its own approach for their implementation in accordance with the directives contained in the royal letter of designation."

Representatives of various organisations visited the Prime Ministry on Thursday to congratulate the prime minister and his team on their mandate.

The well-wishers included the outgoing prime minister, Abdul Karim Kabarini, former prime ministers, and prominent personalities.

## U.S., Russia differ over NATO, but see improvement in ties

HELSINKI (Agencies) — Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton failed to patch up their differences over North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) expansion at their summit here Friday, but they said that a new era in Russia-NATO ties could be only weeks away.

The two leaders agreed to a new round of arms-reduction negotiations designed to dramatically reduce nuclear stockpiles.

Sitting in a wheelchair, with Mr. Yeltsin sitting stiffly beside him, Mr. Clinton said the Russian leader agreed to secure passage of the START II treaty in the Russian Duma, a long-time goal of the administration.

"But we will not stop there," the president declared. Mr. Clinton and Mr. Yeltsin agreed on START III guidelines, too.

Still, the president was leaving Helsinki without agreement on the most ticklish U.S.-Russia issue: expansion of NATO to include former Soviet states. Mr. Yeltsin said he feared "a potentially threatening build up" of Western combat forces near his nation's borders.

Mr. Clinton said the agreement on "guidelines" for START III negotiations has the goal of reducing strategic warhead stockpiles for both countries to 2,000 to 2,500, with the cuts completed by 2007. He said that would amount to an 80 per cent reduction from cold war peaks.

Mr. Clinton came to Helsinki with a package of arms control proposals aimed at soothing Russian fears that the West is seeking military advantage. The United States also hopes the package will encourage Moscow to ratify the START II arms control treaty, signed in 1993 but never put into effect.

Russian critics say the treaty is a bad deal that was accepted out of weakness. The pact sets a warhead limit of 3,500 on each side, down from pre-treaty levels of about 8,000. Importantly, it calls for elimination by 2003 of land-based nuclear weapons with multiple warheads, which would strip Russia of its SS-18, the most powerful weapon in its arsenal. Russia then would have to build single-warhead missiles it cannot afford.

But the leaders could not avoid their disagreement over NATO. "We believe that the eastward expansion of NATO is a mistake and a serious one at that," Mr. Yeltsin said Mr.

(Continued on page 7)

## Clinton leads denunciation of Tel Aviv attack, says PNA must live up to obligations

HELSINKI (Agencies) — The United States led a chorus of international condemnation Friday at a deadly blast in a Tel Aviv cafe, which killed four people including the bomber and injured 47 and blew another large hole in the Middle East peace process.

U.S. President Bill Clinton expressed his outrage at Friday's blast, and urged the Palestinians to take all possible steps to help erase terror from the peace process once and for all.

Britain, Germany, Italy and the European Union all quickly expressed their condemnation at the attack, while Russia followed suit and called for a resumption of dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

The blast was claimed by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) as a response to Israel's decision to build a new settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Clinton, who interrupted his summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Finland to call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and express his condolences, said that despite the anger at the Israeli decision to start work on the settlement, "nothing justifies a return to the

slaughter of innocent civilians."

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) "must take all possible steps to make that clear and to prevent any terror from occurring," Mr. Clinton said.

"This is essential for negotiating a meaningful and lasting peace. There must be absolutely no doubt in the minds of the friends or the enemies of peace that the Palestinian (National) Authority is unilaterally opposed to terror and unalterably committed to preventing and preventing such acts," Mr. Clinton said.

"No one in the Middle East can guarantee 100 per cent protection against terror, but all the people who participate in the peace process should guarantee 100 per cent effort against terror," Mr. Clinton added.

A spokesman for U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said Mr. Annan "strongly condemns" the bombing in Tel Aviv.

At the same time Mr. Annan "wishes to reiterate his appeal to the parties not to allow odious acts of this nature to derail the peace process," the spokesman said.

Mr. Annan "sincerely hopes" that the Israelis and

Palestinians "will intensify their efforts to overcome existing obstacles to a speedy return to the peace process."

In addition, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson called the bombing "tragic," saying it "shows the endless cycle of violence. Our hearts go with the state of Israel again."

Mr. Richardson said that "the best thing the Security Council could do is stay calm and not interject anything that will negatively affect the peace process."

Moscow, a co-sponsor of the flagging Middle East peace process, said that a resumption of dialogue was the only way "to get the Middle East out of the vicious circle of violence and extremism."

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo sent condolences on behalf of the European Union, expressing "deep horror and condemnation" at the "senseless terrorist act."

Britain "unreservedly" condemned "this latest wicked terrorist attack," according to a Foreign Office statement, while German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel "strongly"

(Continued on page 7)



## Egyptian religious, political leaders vow to defend Jerusalem

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian religious and political leaders called for a holy war and a boycott against Israel at a meeting following Friday prayers in Al Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest authority.

The head of Al Azhar, Sheikh Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi, who attended the meeting, said: "We are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of Jerusalem and (the) Al Aqsa Mosque."

"We will defend Jerusalem, and we will close ranks for the sake of our brothers in Palestine," Sheikh Tantawi said according to statements carried by the Egyptian Middle East News Agency (MENA).

The meeting came after Israel began construction work Tuesday on a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Egyptian Religious Affairs Minister Hani Zaqzuq told the meeting: "From this place we declare our total condemnation of all the settlement schemes carried out by Israel to Judaize Jerusalem."

"All of us from the president to the people will always stand opposed to tyranny and we will defend

Jerusalem," Mr. Zaqzuq said.

MENA said the meeting of around 1,000 people recommended "the boycott of Israel, criticised U.S. support of Israel which hampers the peace process ... and announced a jihad (holy war) to defend Jerusalem and Palestinian rights."

The meeting followed Friday prayers at Al Azhar led by Sheikh Tantawi which were attended by an estimated 2,000 people.

"We support the Palestinians, we are against the usurpation of other people's land," Sheikh Tantawi said in his sermon, accusing Israel of defying international public opinion.

After the prayers hundreds of worshippers shouted anti-Israel slogans, warning that the armies of the Prophet Mohammad were on their way to liberate Jerusalem which they stressed was Palestinian land.

Earlier Sheikh Tantawi told the government daily Al Akhbar newspaper that Muslims who gave up on Jerusalem would be committing "a sin and betraying" Islam.

"God has entrusted all

Muslims with the defence of Jerusalem, its Arab identity, its freedom and protect it against those who want to Judaize it," Sheikh Tantawi told the newspaper.

"Whoever does not confront this with arms, money, efforts, by raising their voice to vent their anger or throw stones is a sinner and betrays the trust God placed in him," the leader said.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid said Friday that Israel's settlement policy in Arab East Jerusalem was pushing the peace process to the edge of the abyss.

"These Israeli measures are pushing the peace process to the edge of the abyss," Mr. Abdul Meguid said in a statement marking the 52nd anniversary of the 22-member pan-Arab organisation.

"We tell the whole world that Israeli practices, in Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or southern Lebanon, undermine its credibility concerning the peace process," he said.

"The Palestinian people are leading a bitter struggle which is escalating day by day because of Israel's provocative practices," Mr. Abdul Meguid said.



CLASHES IN HEBRON: A Palestinian aims a sling shot at Israeli soldiers in Hebron on Friday in clashes pitting hundreds of stone-throwing Palestinian protesters and Israeli soldiers. The Palestinians were protesting the start of construction of a Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem (see page one) (AFP photo)

## Turkish Islamists reject military plan to curtail public sale of weapons

ANKARA (AFP) — Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's party has rejected a bill to curb public sale of small arms, giving a fresh signal that it will resist a plan by Turkey's powerful army for a crackdown against Islamist hardliners.

A parliamentary committee, dominated by deputies from the ruling pro-Islamic Welfare Party, Thursday rejected a bill to limit the sale of pump-action shotguns to the public, the press reported on Friday.

Under the draft law, the pump-action shotguns would no longer be considered as ordinary hunting rifles and their sale would require a special license for the buyer.

The bill was part of an 18-point army-backed plan to curb creeping Islamisation, which was endorsed at a Feb. 28 meeting of the military-dominated national security council (MGK), Turkey's highest advisory body.

The plan called for firm controls on the purchase of pump-action shotguns, the sales of which have surged in recent months, allegedly to hardliners.

Chief columnist Oktay Eksi of the liberal Istanbul daily Hurriyet blasted the parliamentary committee move, saying the bill's rejection was an outcome of cooperation between the Islamists and the arms lobby in Turkey.

"The move is also related to Erbakan's previous remarks over the modalities of welfare coming to power," Mr. Eksi said.

Mr. Erbakan had said before the December 1995 election which made his party the largest one: "Welfare will certainly come to power, but we will see later whether this process will be peaceful or bloody."

Mr. Erbakan, who had initially refused to endorse

the MGK plan, later signed it under strong pressure by the pro-secular military and on March 13 his government pledged to implement it.

The MGK resolutions also include a ban on pro-Sharia (Islamic law) propaganda on television and radio, tighter restrictions on religious dress and measures to prevent Islamist hardliners from entering state administration.

The plan also demands strict surveillance of financial organisations controlled by religious fraternities and the closure of illegally operating and privately-run Islamic schools.

However, since endorsing the MGK resolutions in theory, Mr. Erbakan's cabinet has made almost no concrete moves toward the plan's implementation.

The exception was a decision by the Ankara governorship for the closure of three Islamic schools, among hundreds of others, which had been illegally operating beyond the government's control.

"We are waiting in patience for the implementation of the MGK resolutions by the government," a top commander said.

"It is still early to comment, we will altogether see what will happen," navy commander Admiral Guven Ozkaya told reporters at a reception here on Wednesday.

Theoretically, the MGK — whose members include the president, the prime minister, senior ministers and five top military commanders — is an advisory body, but its resolutions are traditionally implemented to the letter by the government.

The MGK is scheduled to meet again this week, and the top agenda item will be the government's handling of its February resolutions.

## Sudanese breadbasket becomes garrison

YEI, Sudan (AFP) — Once the breadbasket of southern Sudan, the city of Yeil has become at once garrison town, prison and refugee camp, just over a week after its conquest by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The stench of dozens of rotting corpses of government soldiers strewn among burnt-out vehicles, abandoned weapons, ammunition belts and copies of the Koran just outside the city on the road south testify to recent fierce fighting.

There, a column of 1,700 government troops and Ugandan guerrillas of the west Nile bank front was ambushed by the SPLA on March 13, just after Yeil was taken. They did not know the city had fallen.

The rebels, who have been fighting for 13 years to free the largely Christian and animist south of Sudan from domination by the Arabised, Islamic north, took control of Yeil for the first time ever on March 11.

They say that the southern

Western and Eastern Equatoria provinces have now been "practically liberated" in an offensive begun on March 9, and they are advancing on Juba, the regional capital and the last government stronghold in the south.

Soldiers proudly show off the spoils of the fighting around Yeil: three tanks and several Howitzers.

Survivors have joined the hundreds of prisoners taken since the SPLA began its offensive, crammed 15 to a cell but apparently in good health.

Those with light injuries lie outside, some stretched out on the bare earth, under armed guard.

Colonel Ali Tayeb Al Hussein, who commanded the column with a number of officers, gets special treatment: a bit more space.

Sitting on the ground in his cell, he seems indifferent to his predicament, saying only that the rebels "fought better."

No humanitarian organisation is caring for the prisoners, who for the moment

are being fed by the already poorly provisioned SPLA.

At Yeil's hospital, which is without electricity, two doctors operate on the injured from the front line, now 80 kilometres away. They are desperate for medicine.

Tens of thousands of Yeil's residents have fled over the last few years, and many of those in the city are now displaced people: Sudanese but also Ugandans and Zaireans, a testament to the fighting that has swamped the whole region.

Civil administration is gradually being restored but only one international humanitarian organisation is operational in the city: Norwegian Population Aid (NPA), financed by Norway and the United States.

In order to function, NPA seems, in contrast to other aid organisations, simply to ignore the question of government authorisation. It trucks in food and medicine from its depots at Lokichokio, in Kenya.

But while civil authority is being reasserted, Yeil

remains above all a garrison town.

Hundreds of SPLA soldiers, kitted out in brand new uniforms, sit in the city awaiting their call to the front for the decisive battle at Juba.

Asked about the beige uniforms, reminiscent of Rwandan army kit, SPLA leader John Garang said they were purchased on the international market.

The SPLA has set up military posts in burnt-down villages along the pot-holed road to Juba. The mostly young soldiers manning them seem relaxed.

Their biggest fear are the Antonovs: Russian transport planes converted into bombers.

An Antonov targeted the aerodrome on Thursday, dropping five bombs, and the rebels had little with which to counter the assault except machine guns mounted on lorries, and their range was inadequate. The SPLA said, however, that it had shot down one Antonov near the front.

## Algerian president sets up watchdog for June election

PARIS (Agencies) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroul on Thursday set up a watchdog group to oversee the June 5 parliamentary elections, which he said would herald an end to Algeria's instability.

"I am convinced that (the people's) participation in the ballot will be as important as the operation for which we are preparing, the operation which will finally and definitively end the situation of institutional instability," Mr. Zeroul said.

The official Algerian news agency APS said the ceremony to install the independent national commission for legislative elections was attended by representatives of 27 political parties and several ministers.

Algeria has been without a parliament since January 1992, when authorities scrapped a general election after the radical Islamic Salvation Front (IFS) took a commanding lead in the first round.

Shortly afterwards, violence broke out and about 50,000 people have since been killed in the country.

The president said Thursday's ceremony "is an event marking the evolution of our country on the way to consolidate pluralist democracy, a path on which Algeria is irreversibly engaged and for which our people have already freely pronounced themselves."

The FIS is barred from contesting the ballot. At least two opposition parties have indicated they might boycott the elections.

The accelerated moves towards elections come amid a spate of bombings that have killed dozens in Algerian towns.

In several cases, Algerian security forces have also carried out revenge attacks against militants, particularly of the Armed Islamic Group, the most radical of all Algerian extremist groups.

## Corrections

Due to a translation error, the meaning of a paragraph in the King's letter to outgoing Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti appeared distorted in Thursday's issue of the Jordan Times. In replying to Mr. Kabariti's assertion that he considered the Monarch as his only terms of reference (in leading the government) His Majesty said: "And since you chose to refer to the terms of reference from which you drew your strength, I want to assure you that those terms of reference are the one Hashemite leadership... whether represented in me and in all the things that I pride myself in... or (those in) what I have entrusted to my brother, the Crown Prince, who for many years has been following upon all the effort of the builders in various fields, especially in the economic field, and with the same terms of reference."

Due to another inadvertent error in the same issue we reported in our lead story on the formation of the new government that Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali formed his first government in May 1994. In fact Dr. Majali first became prime minister in May 1993. We regret the two errors.

## JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

## PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Mickey & Donald Adventures

14:30 ... Cartoon — Moomin

15:00 ... French Programmes

16:00 ... Giffene World Spin

16:30 ... Doc — Innovations

17:00 ... Tilt

17:25 ... Drama — Blue Heelers

18:00 ... French Programmes

19:30 ... News Headlines

19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper

20:00 ... Doc — Magazine 40

20:30 ... Privy

21:10 Science Fiction — "Time Trav"

22:00 ... News in English

22:25 ... MacGyver

23:15 Feature Film — "Forbidden Night"

## PRAYER TIMES

04:16 ... Fajr

05:24 ... Sunrise Doha

11:43 ... Dhuhur

15:10 ... Maghreb

19:09 ... Isha

## CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifich, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661656

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622666

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654922

Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

## WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Scattered showers are expected today with temperatures dropping significantly. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman ... 08/15

Aqaba ... 13/22

Deserts ... 05/18

Jordan Valley ... 11/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 23, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

### NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mukhlis Hakaseh ... 819229

Dr. Rami Sukkar ... 856457

Dr. Fadi Al Khatib ... 856456

Dr. Yousef Al Faqih ... 790104

Firas pharmacy ... 661912

Ferdows pharmacy ... 778336

Al Asema pharmacy ... 637055

Naioukh pharmacy ... 636762

Al Salam pharmacy ... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy ... 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy ... 637660

Najib pharmacy ... 847632

IRBD:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu ... 281484

Al Quds pharmacy ... 1—

ZARQA:

Dr. Rabah Al Bourini ... 990312

Khalifeh pharmacy ... 985417

## EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ... 637111

Civil Defence Department ... 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ... 630341

Civil Defence Emergency ... 199

Rescue Police 192 ... 621111

637777

Fire Brigade ... 617101

Blood Bank ... 775121

Highway Police ... 843402

Traffic Police ... 896340

Public Security Department ... 630521

Hotel Complaints ... 948800

Price Complaints ... 861176

Water and Sewerage Complaints ... 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints ... 787111

Telephone Information (direct assistance) ... 121

Overseas Calls ... 1010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs ... 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs ... 661101

Jordan Television ... 773111

Radio Jordan ... 774111

Water Authority ... 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority ... 815615

Electric Power Company ... 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

## HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre ... 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn ... 644281/6

Alkileh Maternity, J. Amn ... 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ... 642362

Malhas, J. Amman ... 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani ... 607071

Shmeisani Hospital ... 669131

University Hospital ... 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital ... 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali ... 664164/6

Italian, Al-Bahajreen ... 777101/3

Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh ... 775111/26

Army, Marka ... 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital ... 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ... 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital ... 09/983323

Zarqa National Hospital ... 09/905560

Ibn Sina Hospital ... 09/986732

Al Hikam Modern Hospital ... 109990990

IRBD:

Princess Basma Hospital ... 02/275555

Greek Catholic Hospital ... 02/273275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ... 02/247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital ... 03/314111

## FOR THE TRAVELLER

### QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone 08/52700 or 08/523250.

## ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights



## Crown Prince thanks well-wishers, stresses importance of education

AMMAN (Petra) — Celebrating his 50th birthday on Thursday, HRH Crown Prince Hassan thanked the Jordanian people for all their good wishes and reaffirmed his life commitment to serving the nation.

"I would like to express my thanks to all who sent me good wishes on this occasion and I am determined to dedicate all I have learned and acquired in experience all these years to serving the Jordanian family in which I take pride," Prince Hassan said in a live television conversation with Jordan Television News At Eight Thursday evening.

Prince Hassan said "the most important and precious asset to the Jordanian family is education, which helps it to remain cohesive and thus concentrate its efforts on meeting the challenges of the 21st century with the dynamism of the young and the wisdom of the elders."

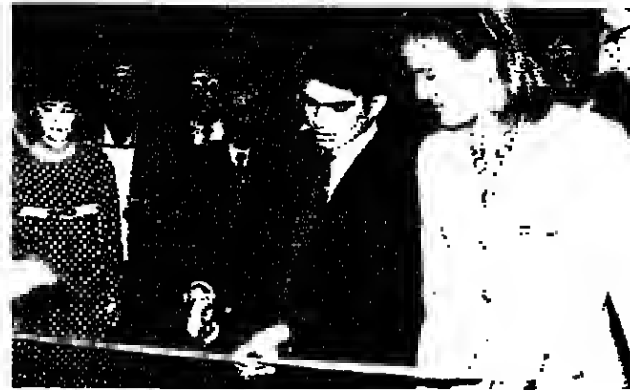
Heads of state worldwide sent cables of congratulations to the Crown Prince and said that they appreciate his national and international efforts in so many realms.

He also received cables from citizens, public officials, the diplomatic corps, non-governmental organisation representatives, and private sector principals.

As part of Jordan's celebrations of the Crown Prince's birthday, his son, HRH Prince Rashid, opened an exhibition entitled, "The Hashemites' History Through Jordanian Stamps," on display at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) by the Ministry of Post and Com-



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Friday visits Mu'ta University and (below) His Royal Highness Prince Rashid opens an exhibition marking the 50th birthday of the Crown Prince



His Royal Highness Prince Rashid opens an exhibition marking the 50th birthday of the Crown Prince

munications. Open to the public until March 23, the exhibition includes stamps depicting various stages in Prince Hassan's life, developments in Jordan since the creation of the emirate, and the coronation of the late King Faisal in Syria, Ottoman stamps about the Hashemites in Iraq and Syria, in addition to currency used at the time of King Abdullah and His Majesty King Hussein.

On Friday, Crown Prince Hassan joined worshippers in attending Friday prayers held at Al Hussein Mosque at Mu'ta University. The Regent and worshippers listened to the Friday sermon. Attending the prayers were Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abadi and Royal Court Imam Ahmad Huleil.

Prince Hassan also toured Mu'ta University and met with the university's president, Eid Dahiyat, who briefed him on the university's activities and role in carrying out scientific research and serving the local community.

## Ministry pledges to renovate school in Wadi Musa

By Tanya Hajjouqa  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — After four years of reported health hazards in a Wadi Mousa school, the Ministry of Education has finally promised to renovate the building, according to ministry officials.

Asbestos insulation in the Wadi Mousa Secondary School for Girls has been linked as a possible cause for fainting spells, sneezing, headaches, and a "peculiar smell" in the building, Principal Basma Twessi told the Jordan Times.

"The smell is horrible, as though one is in a closed

room with rotting food," she said. "One gets used to it when one smells it daily."

The problem came to light when a voluntary society of doctors offered one free day of treatment to Wadi Mousa residents and encountered a high rate of illness amongst students and teachers at the school last December.

Volunteer Hassan Badran uncovered 30 cases of severe allergies in students and teachers, "a high number for one school building," he said.

The physicians attributed the unusually high numbers of illness to the building's asbestos insulation, a substance no longer allowed in

certain industrialised countries due to associated health hazards.

The Ministry of Education has since sent out a team of engineers to appraise the situation and has also installed a higher quality of glass in windows.

The [former] Minister of Education promised me that he would renovate the school building by this summer, Ms. Twessi said, adding that if no changes occurred she would seek intervention at higher levels.

"They should build a new building," she said. "Besides the health risk, there is no room for school nurses and no proper school

yard for the girls."

A copy of a letter from former Minister of Health Aref Bataineh to the Ministry of Education in 1992 indicates that several school buildings, including the Wadi Mousa Secondary School, posed certain environmental health and safety risks.

Director of Maintenance at the Ministry of Education Osama Mughlid affirmed that renovations for the Wadi Mousa school were on the summer agenda but stated that he had no knowledge of the history of the school's health record.

"We work with a small annual budget, and we pass the allocated amount to

each governorate," he said. "They spend it as they see fit."

He asserted that an engineering study was planned for the school this year and admitted the possibility of a new school building by the end of 1998.

When asked if the planned summer renovations would take care of the lamented odour and health risks, he maintained that it would "take care of the problem."

"I believe that the much needed changes are finally going to happen, and that my students will finally learn in a healthy environment," Ms. Twessi concluded.

## USAID to establish small businesses fund in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is currently establishing a fund to support small businesses in Jordan in an effort to contribute to the Kingdom's economic development. USAID sources said Friday.

Jamal Jabiri, the USAID official in charge of private sector affairs, stated that the fund would be financed from the agency's annual budget of \$120 million.

He described the USAID budget as used to support small businesses run by indigenous women in 40 countries. Addressing a symposium, organised by the American Centre, Mr. Jabiri confirmed that contacts with government institutions are underway to agree on allocations for small businesses in Jordan.

This, he stated, comes in preparation for granting loans to citizens wishing to set up small income-generating projects.

Since 1994, USAID has provided more than \$1.5 million to support small businesses in Jordan and has contributed to creating job opportunities for many herein, Mr. Jabiri said.

## Conference calls for environmental strategies in sharing resources

By Tanya Hajjouqa  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — American environmentalists called for creative strategies in sharing resources in the Middle East and stressed an open approach in education in a lecture at the American Centre last week.

Director of the Centre for Environmental Resource Management at the University of Texas Charles Groat stated that children could also play an important role in environmental protection.

He maintained that the challenge was in effectively teaching the young through innovative and lively methods.

Both Dr. Groat and Chief of Education at the Arizona State Game and Fish Department Kerry Baldwin addressed the lecture as part of a follow-up programme to last week's environmental conference in Cairo.

"We must breathe new life into the system and unify our efforts," Mr. Baldwin said. "No one agency or ministry can do it alone."

He maintained that a flexible, open environmental curriculum would accelerate change, and that parents must educate their youth from an early age.

"If a child tells a parent that the water tap should not be left running, that parent may be more apt to listen in order to demonstrate right from wrong," he added.

When asked how to inspire environmental awareness amongst people whose immediate concerns might be more akin to providing food to the family, Dr. Groat advised focusing on improvements to more immediate environmental conditions.

"Boiling water, better hygienic conditions—trying to improve the quality of life rather than focusing on the rain forest," he said.

Mr. Baldwin suggested attending to basic health issues like teaching a poor community how to obtain and purify water.

"We must be realistic in our expectations, but anyone can grasp basic conservation issues," he said.

Mr. Baldwin cited examples of successful conservation methods in Arizona, such as the installation of "low-flow" shower heads and toilets.

"You create a monetary incentive, the less water you use the less you pay," he said.

He also gave the Arizona lottery, of

which an annual \$10,000 is allocated to environmental agencies, as an example of generating funds.

In a meeting with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), these environmentalists continued discussions from the Cairo conference and proposed future bilateral projects.

Mr. Baldwin praised the RSCN for the success of their eco-club programme, which trained 700 leaders last year to teach environmental awareness among Jordanian youth through field trips and other activities.

The conference, sponsored by the United States Information Service (USIS), hosted environmentalists from Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, and the United States.

Coordinated by the Education Development Centre (EDC) and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), the conference focused on creating links and expanding networks between countries on environmental issues.

"The biggest 'positive' that came out of the conference was an agreement to establish a regional environmental education forum," Mr. Baldwin said.

The Middle East Environmental Education Forum (MEEEF), still in the beginning stages, will be a non-governmental organisation cooperating in regional environmental issues.

"We have now taken a first step towards establishing an integrated, environmental education programme in all of our countries," Head of the Public Awareness of the RSCN and Jordanian representative to the conference Ahmad Rusan said.

According to Mr. Rusan, a follow-up conference will occur in Amman as soon as funding is secured with the USIS.

Further results of the conference include plans for a water health educational programme between Lebanon and the University of Texas (UT) as well as a bilateral environmental research programme between Yarmouk University and the UT, Dr. Groat said.

"Diversity is natural and important to healthy eco-systems, we can celebrate our diversity and jointly achieve our goals," Mr. Baldwin concluded.

## Ministry prepares for 'model village'

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment has announced plans for the construction of Al Omari-village, near the Jordanian-Saudi Arabian border.

The village will serve as a nucleus for other border villages in the future, it said.

Ministry official Saleh Jaradat stated that the village will provide for its residents' needs and potentially employ citizens in agricultural production projects.

Mr. Jaradat, who is head of the ministry's city and village planning department, maintained that the development of the village comes in response to His Majesty King Hussein's call for the creation of developed and productive border villages.

The village will be set up

on 5,000 dunums of land and designed in accordance with ministry plans, taking environmental needs, land reclamation, and agricultural projects into account, he said.

This 'model village' is considered the first of its kind in the Middle East and will be an integrated social and economic unit capable of expansion even in desert and semi-arid lands, Mr. Jaradat explained.

He said the project will be divided into four parts: the first stage entails building a "green belt" to separate the projected village from the main highway which links Zarqa with the border.

This green belt is designed to halt the encroachment of desert land onto arable land, Mr. Jaradat elucidated.

The second stage will entail laying the project's infrastructure for building

a health centre, police station, mosque, customs office and other utilities such as rest houses, a gas station and a goods-clearance office while the third stage will cover building the residential quarters and the fourth stage entails preparing areas adjacent to the village for future expansions and allocating areas for agricultural production, according to Mr. Jaradat.

He maintained that the village will gradually become self-sustaining and export produce to neighbouring regions. Mr. Jaradat described village homes as comprising a total area of 424 dunums built on 656 plots of land and supporting 4,590 inhabitants.

Should the project succeed, he added, the ministry will plan other border villages in the future.

## AMO director states increase in revenues

AMMAN (Petra) — Improvement in the quality and quantity of agricultural production last year helped the Kingdom boost its exports and thus earn more than \$100 million in revenues despite strong competition in world markets, according to Director General of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Salem Lawzi.

Dr. Lawzi told a meeting of the Amman Rotary Club Friday that production last year increased to two million tonnes and that nearly half the exports were tomatoes.

He said 1996 produce exports rose by 40,000 tonnes over the previous year.

Fruits and vegetables were transported to Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE),

Lebanon, Qatar and Saudi Arabia and other countries, he said.

Dr. Lawzi announced that he formed a committee to help control produce imports by setting a customs duty on these products and thus protecting Jordanian markets.

He also said that the AMO and other authorities are working together to phase out compulsory produce pricing and to begin to float prices, thus creating an atmosphere of competition.

Dr. Lawzi maintained that this would ultimately benefit the consumer as well as encourage merchants to offer better quality produce.

## Society to aid public to view Hale-Bopp comet

By Zeina Durra  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For the first time in approximately 4,000 years, the Hale-Bopp comet is visible from Earth, having last been recorded in 2,600 BC, around the time of the ancient Egyptians.

Scientists calculated, using Kepler's Laws of Planetary Motion, that the comet has taken 4,000 years to revolve around the sun.

The hype and intrigue surrounding the comet, according to Hani Dalee of the Jordanian Meteorology Society (JMS), have ensued as "Hale-Bopp is the brightest, most predictable comet that has entered our solar system in four centuries."

He also stated that the comet's nucleus "is four times larger (40 km) than that of the renowned Halley's comet of 1985." This means that both the comet's size and brightness have given scientists time to prepare for its arrival, increasing possibilities for its

exploration.

Hale-Bopp could bring many longed-for answers as now scientists may be able to understand the formation of the planets through studying the comet's light spectra.

In doing so they will determine the chemical composition of the comet, furthering understanding of how the planets were formed from the condensation of an enormous cloud of primordial dust particles present at that time.

In addition, Hale-Bopp could afford more evidence towards a theory investigating the reason for the presence of water on the earth: that water is the result of comets which previously collided with the earth's surface.

The theory continues that the comet's core, made of ice, melted causing the formation of our oceans. If the trace elements from the comet's samples correlate with those present in the world's oceans, the validity of this current expostulation would be enforced.

"A comet consists of a nucleus made up of a mountain of ice with rocks and solid gases," Mr. Dalee explained. "Upon approaching the sun, the solid gas evaporates due to the sun's heat. This evaporation is repelled by solar winds, creating a tail of gas and dust particles behind the comet, many millions of miles in length."

Since Aug. 1996, Hale-Bopp has been visible to astronomers and for the past two weeks has been clearly seen at both dawn and dusk, weather permitting.

The most auspicious time to see the comet in Amman, Mr. Dalee advises, is from March 22nd to April 10th. At that time the comet is closest to the sun and therefore at its brightest.

The Hale-Bopp comet will be brighter than the brightest star Sirius on March 31st, he added. This gives the trained eye the possibility of seeing it during the daytime.

To spy the comet, one should aim towards the Northeast at dawn

and the Northwest at dusk.

According to Mr. Dalee, the best time to see the comet is "on a clear night in the desert as one is far enough away from light pollution, making it possible to see the entire length of the comet's tail."

The Jordanian Meteorology Society will hold public meetings in both English and Arabic for those who are interested in seeing the comet. This will give people the opportunity, free of charge, to observe Hale-Bopp through the society's equipment.

These sessions will be advertised by the JMS at a later date.

Mr. Dalee also mentioned, for enthusiasts, that there will be a partial lunar eclipse on Mar. 24 at 04.58.

The partial eclipse will diminish lunar light pollution, creating more suitable conditions under which the comet will be visible.

What's  
Going  
On

### CONCERT

\*Performance by American horn player Adam Norris and the orchestra of the National Music Conservatory at the Hotel InterContinental at 8:00 p.m.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Philatelic exhibition entitled

"History of the Hashemites Through the Postage Stamps," marking HRH Crown Prince El-Hassan's birthday, at the Royal Cultural Centre, until March 23.

\* ISO-9000 Show at Philadelphia Hotel, until March 23.

\* Paintings by Saadi Dawood at the Orient Gallery, Issam Ajlouni St., Shamsi, until March 31.

\* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery Umm Utheina, until April 6.

\* Artworks by Mohammad Ali Shaker at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh until March 31.

\* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dallool at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

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## Zaire rebels reject ceasefire call as Mobutu heads home

KINSHASA (AFP) — Zaireans nervously awaited Friday the return of ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko on a last-ditch bid to save his regime, but rebels scorned his call for a ceasefire and tightened their grip on the east.

With his 31-year authoritarian reign on the verge of meltdown following a five-month rebel offensive, the president left Kinshasa on board a chartered DC-8 jet.

Almost at the same time, rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila left the rebel stronghold of Goma, on the border with Rwanda, and later arrived in Kisangani where an enthusiastic crowd of 15,000 people gathered to greet him.

The journeys reflected their personal fortunes: Mr. Mobutu trying desperately to shore up a crumbling regime, Mr. Kabila revelling in the capture of Kisangani, Zaire's third largest city, six days ago.

After arriving in the strategic Zaire River city, he again rejected a call by Mr. Mobutu Thursday for a ceasefire followed by talks to end the civil war.

"First we negotiate," he said, before being whisked away by bodyguards. In the past few days, much of the rebel alliance government has relocated to the city.

Mr. Mobutu's plane took off at 9:45 a.m. (0845 GMT). He boarded the air-

craft holding his wife's arm, waving goodbye before disappearing into the cabin.

The 66-year-old has spent all but a few weeks of the past seven months in hospital or recuperating from prostate cancer surgery at his luxurious villa on the French Riviera.

During that time, the rebels have captured the eastern fifth of this vast nation. Mr. Kisangani was their biggest prize yet and now they are heading south to Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city, further south on the border with Zambia.

Mr. Mobutu Thursday proposed a "national council" that would meet rapidly to find "with all our brothers without exception," a solution to the crisis.

"A ceasefire must be implemented to end the suffering which our people are enduring and to allow humanitarian aid to be transported securely to those who need it," he said.

Both ideas were rejected out of hand by the rebels, who have vowed to march on to Kinshasa by June and finish the regime by themselves.

Earlier in Goma, rebel spokesman Louis Hamuli Nyarubasa said Mr. Mobutu was trying to cling on to power, "but we are going to continue our war until we chase him from power."

"Our target is Kinshasa, it's too late for a ceasefire," he said, and the only talks with Mr. Mobutu would be

on the "modalities" of his departure.

As for a national council, he added, "it's ridiculous for a head of state to make such a declaration, which proves there is no longer any (functioning) institution."

Rebel "finance minister" Mawampanga Mwana Nanga said their aim was to get rid of the president. "Until the day he says 'I am stepping down', we will go on fighting."

Since his surgery in Switzerland in August, Mr. Mobutu has only returned twice to his homeland. He first went back on Dec. 19, and was greeted by a wave of optimism among Zaireans that he could turn the tide.

Despite shaking up the army and government, a counter-offensive failed to materialise however, and he returned to his villa on Jan. 9.

Mr. Mobutu also flew into Zaire on Feb. 7, but this time discreetly to his palace in Gbadolite, in the north of the country, and returned to France two weeks later.

In Kinshasa already is beleaguered Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo, who flew back to the capital from Nairobi after a six-nation summit.

While he was away, Zaire's transitional parliament voted to sack him, but Mr. Kengo dismissed the move as invalid as it did not have the required majority.

So far, the Zairean army has failed spectacularly to

get to grips with the rebels. The capture of Kisangani was typical: After several days of fighting nearby, government troops simply fled in disarray.

Rebel spokesman Hamuli Nyarubasa said the rebel forces were less than 200 kilometres from the copper-mining region of Lubumbashi, and were also heading west toward Mbuji-Mayi.

Mohammad Sahnoun, joint envoy for the United Nations and Organisation for African Unity for the Great Lakes region, will go to Kisangani Saturday to brief Mr. Kabila on the Nairobi summit, informed sources in Goma said.

In a separate development, Zaire's main opposition group said Thursday it had sent envoys to talk to Mr. Kabila.

"We have delegates en route to meet Mr. Kabila," Adrien Phongo, general-secretary of the Radical Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), told a news conference, adding that informal contacts had already been made.

Mr. Phongo said the UDPS and Mr. Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) shared a common aim: The overthrow of President Mobutu.

The UDPS of veteran radical Etienne Tshisekedi, a long-standing Mobutu foe, is doing its utmost to unseat Prime Minister Kengo.



Zairean government soldiers walk through Kisangani on their way to turn themselves in to rebels. Hundreds of government soldiers who have surrendered to the rebels are currently being detained and reeducated in a camp near Kisangani (Reuters photo)

## New Russian cabinet meets

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's reshuffled cabinet, under pressure to defuse rising social tensions and jumpstart stalled economic reforms, held its first meeting Thursday as President Boris Yeltsin left for a summit meeting in Helsinki.

Mr. Yeltsin headed for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton able to count on strong support from political opponents in parliament for his campaign to halt NATO's eastward expansion, the issue expected to dominate the two-day summit.

The Communist-dominated state Duma lower house of parliament had been due to debate a non-binding anti-NATO resolution declaring Russia would never become part of the Western Bloc. But deputies decided to hold the discussions over until Friday.

They also postponed a planned debate on an emotional call to Mr. Yeltsin not to move the mummified corpse of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin from its mausoleum on Red Square.

There is little agreement over the big economic problems confronting the country.

Mr. Yeltsin left behind a new-look cabinet in which young reformers have taken broad control of economic policy.

The president, firmly back at the helm after many months of illness, hopes that new first deputy Premier Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov can swiftly resolve such problems as non-payment of bills between enterprises and chronic wage delays.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told Thursday's cabinet meeting that Mr. Chubais was well placed to tackle the problems.

"I hope that Anatoly Chubais' knowledge and experience will help us make colossal progress," Interfax news agency quoted the premier as saying.

Mr. Chernomyrdin said there would be more personnel changes in the government but added they would not be announced until after Mr. Yeltsin's return from Helsinki Saturday.

Mr. Chernomyrdin urged his deputies and ministers to work as a single team. "There may be different opinions here at the government meetings but everyone should work as one fist to carry out decisions once they are taken," he said.

Mr. Chubais and Mr. Nemtsov have said they are committed to giving a new push to economic reform by introducing unpopular changes in the paternalistic welfare system and by scrapping many benefits granted to enterprises and whole sectors of the economy.

## Armenia picks Karabakh separatist as new premier

YEREVAN (R) — Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan has named the leader of Azerbaijan's breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region, Robert Kocharyan, as Armenia's new prime minister.

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan's decree gave no explanation for the step, which is likely to enrage neighbouring Azerbaijan.

The two are involved in a protracted conflict over Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave which broke away from Azeri rule in the late 1980s.

No immediate reaction was available from Azerbaijan.

Mr. Kocharyan will replace Armen Sarkisyan who resigned earlier this month because of bad health.

Some Armenian officials have hinted that Mr. Kocharyan — who has kept his distance from Yerevan's latest political intrigues — is a rare compromise figure acceptable to both Mr. Ter-Petrosyan and his many political opponents.

"Apart from carrying out the premier's duties, Mr. Kocharyan could play a unifying role in Armenian society," Russia's Interfax News Agency quoted the deputy chairman of the Armenian parliament, Ara Saakyan, as saying.

Last September, Mr. Ter-Petrosyan won reelection in a poll which the opposition says was not fair. His victory was followed by a crackdown on his opponents.

Nationalist sentiment over Karabakh is one of the few issues on which the president and the opposition see largely eye to eye.

"Kocharyan is a balanced, highly educated person who is treated with high respect in all sectors of society," Mr. Saakyan said.

Mr. Kocharyan, 43, is one of the toughest of Karabakh's pro-independence leaders. He spearheaded the separatist movement in

1988. Already effectively in charge, he won an unrecognised presidential election in Nagorno-Karabakh last year.

Thousands of people were killed in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Karabakh, which began in the late 1980s. It was the first of many violent ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union which helped hasten its disintegration.

Shortly before a 1994 ceasefire which has yet to produce a lasting settlement, determined Karabakh forces marched into Azerbaijan proper and still hold big chunks of its territory.

Azerbaijan insists that Armenia used the local separatists merely as a cover for its attempts to annex the territory.

Armenia has always insisted it was not formally involved in the conflict though it was fully sympathetic to the separatists. Talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia, launched after the ceasefire and aimed at finding a lasting political solution to the Karabakh problem, have stalled with both parties refusing to compromise so far despite international mediation.

Azerbaijan is especially keen to solve the Karabakh conflict, which has more than once led to domestic unrest, in the view of multi-billion dollar projects that have been launched to develop offshore oil deposits in the Caspian Sea.

One of the planned pipelines, to deliver oil to Europe via Georgia's Black Sea ports, would run along the Karabakh border.

Political analysts have said that long-term political stability is a crucial factor for foreign investors in the oil project.

Landlocked Armenia, exhausted by years of conflict, has also appeared reluctant to let open hostility with Azerbaijan replace the at least visible calm of the last two years.

## Red faces at U.S. embassy in Moscow as Russian sleeps over

MOSCOW (R) — A naked Russian soldier was caught in the shower of the top American envoy in Moscow, the Washington Post reported Thursday, prompting an embarrassed revelation as the U.S.-Russian summit began in Helsinki.

A U.S. embassy spokesman confirmed that a young man who identified himself as a runaway army conscript was discovered in the diplomatic living quarters on the weekend of March 8-9.

"He had spent the night," he said.

But the spokesman declined comment on the Washington Post's assertion that the man had been caught with no clothes on in a shower at Townhouse One, the residence of the U.S. charge d'affaires, John Tefft, and his wife, Mariella.

Mr. Tefft is acting head of the U.S. mission in Moscow, pending the arrival of a replacement for Ambassador Thomas Pickering.

The embassy said the man was unarmed and made no demands or threats before he was handed over to the Russian authorities.

The Russian Foreign Ministry confirmed that a man had been arrested. A spokesman called the incident "surprising" but gave no details.

There was no indication the man had any access to sensitive material — nor that the visit had anything to do with the high diplomacy going on in Helsinki, where Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin have arrived for a summit likely to focus on hard bargaining over NATO's plans to expand in Eastern Europe.

The embassy spokesman declined comment on how the man had breached security or what steps had been taken to prevent a recurrence. He could not recall a similar incident.

The Washington Post said the breach had prompted an intensive review of security. A diplomatic insider familiar with the layout of the compound in central Moscow told Reuters the extensive living quarters there were not heavily guarded and diplomats were strictly forbidden to keep classified material at home.

Local Russian guards on contract handle much of the security in the residential areas, he said, leaving U.S. Marines to their primary responsibility of protecting more sensitive sectors.

"Someone could have, in the middle of the night, walked down that row of townhouses, which is out of the view of the cameras, and gotten in," the source said. "People can get over the wall, and maybe without people even noticing."

Violence and vote-rigging mar Sri Lankan local polls

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sporadic violence and charges of vote-rigging marred Sri Lanka's local government elections Friday as security forces and police remained on red alert, officials said.

A bomb explosion near a polling booth in the north-western town of Wunduppu wounded at least 14 people, four of them seriously, while shootings and

assaults were reported elsewhere, police said.

The good news was that there were no deaths during the voting.

Seven people were killed in election-related violence in the five-week run up to the polls.

A spokesman for the main opposition United National Party (UNP) said there had been attacks and intimid-

## 4 people killed by rampaging gangs in Albania

TIRANA (AFP) — At least four people have been killed in Albania in the past 24 hours, the Interior Ministry said Friday, including two victims of armed gangs running amok amid the country's chaos.

In Korçe, in the southeast, a 53-year-old man was shot and killed when armed men broke into his home, sources at the Interior Ministry said. One of the intruders, aged 18, was also killed. No other details were available.

Also in Korçe, a 52-year-old woman was fatally wounded by unknown elements, also at her residence. In the capital Tirana, where a shoot-out was heard overnight Thursday in the area of President Sali Berisha's office, one man died from gunfire, the sources said.

The deaths brought to around 120 the number of people known to have been killed in Albania since Feb. 28 when mass protests over fraudulent investment schemes turned into an armed insurrection against

Mr. Berisha. Around 700 have also been wounded.

Armed gangs are taking advantage of the chaos and the collapse of normal administrative systems to go on the rampage, killing and stealing. Many Western journalists have been forced to hand over their cars by Kalashnikov-wielding marauders.

Socialist Prime Minister Bashkim Fino has pledged a "ruthless" crackdown "on those who terrorise the population," but Albania's army has virtually ceased to exist and the police are in disarray.

Mr. Fino is due to meet with European Union foreign ministers in Rome Tuesday and is likely to renew appeals for urgent humanitarian aid and financial assistance, as well as technical aid in getting the country back on its feet.

On the eve of the meeting, the ministers will also look into the conclusions of a fact-finding mission by Dutch diplomat Count Jan D'Ansembourg who re-

turned from Albania Wednesday.

A key concern of the international community is dwindling food supplies.

Late Thursday, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen warned in Washington of looming shortages in Albania.

"Food shortages will become a critical problem in a very short period of time," he said in a hearing before the House Foreign Relations Committee.

"I think the potential for instability to spread is of great concern to the countries that surround Albania," he added.

Albanian Agriculture Minister Haxhi Aliko also warned that "the situation with state food supplies is very serious and has put the country in an emergency situation."

Italy, which has been swamped by refugees since the crisis began, has said it is prepared to send emergency goods to the stricken country without waiting for other European countries to

make up their minds at the Monday meeting.

Around 11,000 Albanians have reached Italy in the past fortnight, but the flood halted Thursday amid poor weather, conditions and no refugees reached the country again Friday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is due to start distributing essential goods Monday or Tuesday. According to the ICRC, the situation is most desperate in institutions like orphanages and retirement homes that were previously run by local or national authorities.

The Albanian crisis blew up after thousands of people lost their life savings in shady investment schemes which collapsed in January. Anger boiled over into a full-scale rebellion at the beginning of March following weeks of anti-government protests.

Tens of thousands of light arms were seized by looters who pillaged army depots.

## Clinton names Tenet his choice to head CIA

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton Wednesday named to acting Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director George Tenet to head the spy agency permanently, a move expected to avoid the political clash that derailed his first choice for the job.

Mr. Clinton hailed his new choice as someone who "brings a wealth of experience and skill to the challenge of leading our intelligence community into the 21st century."

Mr. Tenet, 44, who was deputy CIA director before his interim appointment as acting director last December, replaces Anthony Lake, who withdrew from consideration Monday after withdrawing Senate confirmation hearings.

"If confirmed, I will do

my level best to provide leadership, stability and strength of purpose to the fine men and women who serve our nation with such devotion," said Mr. Tenet, sending a message to an agency troubled by scandals and changes in leadership.

Mr. Tenet, a close friend of Mr. Lake's, was unlikely to encounter similar stiff opposition in winning Senate confirmation.

Sen. Richard Stelby, Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and a nemesis of the Lake nomination, quickly praised Tenet as "a man of integrity and professionalism. He has a distinguished record of service in the intelligence community."

Senate Republican leader Trent Lott also appeared pleased by the choice of

Tenet. "This looks like a good choice," he said. "I look forward to meeting Mr. Tenet soon and I expect rapid Senate confirmation."

Mr. Clinton said he wanted quickly to name a new choice to head the CIA because of the importance of the job. "You can't have a ship without a captain," he said.

But Mr. Tenet may yet run into trouble, according to a CBS news report Wednesday night.

The network reported that a former state department official whose security clearance was revoked by Mr. Tenet over accusations he revealed CIA secrets to the New York Times suspects that it was Tenet himself who revealed the secrets.

"What he's doing is sitting

in judgment on me about an issue of which I believe he is, in fact, guilty," Richard Nuccio told CBS 60 Minutes programme last November.

CBS' Mike Wallace reported that on Wednesday afternoon he had "reconfirmed that George Tenet had in fact given the CIA secrets to the New York Times, something that Mr. Tenet absolutely denies," and that Mr. Tenet was aided on this by Nancy Soderberg, who was Lake's No. 3 at the National Security Council.

The network further reported that White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Mr. Clinton was aware of Nuccio's accusations and is confident that Mr. Tenet did nothing wrong.

## China gears up for landmark Gore visit

BEIJING (AFP) — Beijing intensified preparations Friday for the landmark visit by U.S. Vice-President Al Gore by hinting at new commitments for Boeing and playing down the significance of China's trade surplus.

The positive overtures followed attacks on the United States for trying to interfere in Hong Kong and for dragging Beijing into its political donations scandal.

"The visit by U.S. Vice-President Gore will be the highest-level event in recent years and will create suitable conditions for the improvement of the environment in bilateral financial, economic and trade relations," said China's Vice Trade Minister Sun Zhenyu.

"I will not exclude the possibility of signing agreements on certain projects... and this also includes the

purchase of Boeing airplanes," he told a media briefing aimed at defusing U.S. anger over its mounting trade deficit with China.

When Mr. Gore arrives late Monday, he will be the highest-level U.S. official to set foot in China since Beijing ordered troops to fire on pro-democracy demonstrators on June 4, 1989 and threw Sino-U.S. relations into six years of turmoil.

The Boeing deal, reported to be in the region of one billion dollars, comes after China purchased more than 30 planes worth \$1.5 billion from Europe's Airbus last year, in a deal partly aimed at piquing Washington over poor Sino-U.S. relations.

In a further sweetener, sun indicated other, unspecified, commercial deals with the United States were on the cards.



## Afghan city picks up pieces after ammunition explosion

JALALABAD, Afghanistan (R) — Old men dug through rubble to salvage belongings from their shattered homes in the eastern city of Jalalabad Thursday after an ammunition dump explosion that killed and wounded scores of people.

Jean-Francois Sonnay of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed 17 deaths and nearly 300 wounded, but told Reuters the actual toll was likely to be much higher.

"This is definitely not the real figure," he said of the death toll in Wednesday's blast. "It's very difficult to have an idea of how many died in the compound or on the road outside."

Mr. Sonnay, head of the ICRC sub-delegation in Jalalabad, said some victims would have been blown to unrecognisable bits.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press said in its first report that about 40 people had been killed and

150 wounded.

The exact death toll may never be known as Afghans often bury their dead privately without taking them to hospital.

The blast flattened the Islamic Taliban militia's Security Department Headquarters, digging a crater 40 metres wide by 10 metres deep in the compound in a western city district.

No walls were standing and only a 3.5-metre high pile of rubble indicated where the main building might have been.

Taliban fighters tried to keep people away from the scene, littered with half-buried mortar bombs and rockets, but no particular security alert appeared to be in force in the city.

The blast scattered ammunition and explosives over a radius of about 1.5 kilometres, demolishing several houses near the Security Department and damaging scores more.

A dead horse lay beside a

wrecked cart and blood-stained puddles showed where some of the casualties had fallen.

"I think it was possibly between 100 and 200 tonnes (of explosives)," Noel Spencer, head of the United Nations Demining Technical Department, told Reuters at the scene.

Two U.N. ordnance disposal teams and two battle area clearance teams, comprising about 50 men in all, were on their way from Kabul to help clear away lethal debris.

Pakistani newspapers quoted Mullah Sadr-i-Azam, deputy governor of Nangarhar province, of which Jalalabad is the capital, as saying the accidental explosion of an artillery shell had set off the arms depot blast.

Denying the possibility of sabotage, he said the explosion had killed four Taliban guards and six civilians.

An ICRC warehouse was damaged and a local employee slightly wounded.

Two Afghan U.N. staffers suffered minor injuries.

Mr. Sonnay said an ICRC survey had found 25 families who were made homeless and destitute by the explosion. "They have lost everything, no house, they have nothing left," he said.

A U.N. official, Erasmus Willie Ibom, said the World Health Organisation had provided a one-tonne medical kit to the main hospital in Jalalabad to tackle what he called a disaster.

"There was a very heavy explosion," recalled Mr. Ibom, acting officer in charge for the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan. "Entire buildings and trees in the area were destroyed. All my windows were shattered."

The Taliban, fired by zeal to spread their strict version of Islam across Afghanistan, captured Jalalabad in September from a group of neutral guerrilla factions before marching on to Kabul.



Afghan people gather next to demolished houses in Jalalabad, a day after an explosion at the Security Department Headquarters of the Islamic Taliban militia. At least 17 people were killed and about 300 injured in an explosion at Taliban's ammunition depot (Reuters photo)

## British committee urges global rules on cloning

LONDON (R) — The world needs regulations on human cloning so that fears of a master race in the making do not hold up an exciting new strand of science, a British parliamentary committee said Thursday.

It produced a report on the cloning of animals from adult cells, stemming from last month's revelation that Scottish scientists had created a sheep called Dolly.

The "birth" of the world's first cloned adult spawned a moral debate about the feasibility of creating humans in laboratories. Ethicists raised fears of dictators cloning themselves and movie stars rising from the dead.

"A great deal of anxiety was expressed about human clones and frankenstein and all that," said Giles Shaw, the Conservative chairman of the Science and

Technology Committee.

"There was no doubt that the media furore, which provoked the suggestion that human cloning was around the corner or the master race was a week or two ahead, helped to diminish that (important scientific) work."

His committee said British law already outlawed human cloning but that it was worth re-examining the legislation to ensure no loopholes existed that could be exploited by madcap scientists bent on producing copycat people.

The United States has banned federal funding of cloning. Germany has called for a worldwide ban on human cloning and Danish scientists have halted research pending a full debate.

The report said Britain's

laws should be copied around the world to prevent unscrupulous scientists dishing in eugenics.

"While the law may need technical adjustments, the regulatory system is essentially sound and should enable the United Kingdom to reap the benefits of the research," it said. "If the international community has the political will to act, it should be possible to reach an agreement on bioethics which would include all countries," it added.

No sooner had news emerged that the Scottish team had beaten worldwide competition to create Dolly, than the British government said it would cut its funding of the project.

The committee said the cuts should be reconsidered urgently and chastised the Agriculture Ministry for

"cavalier and blinkered" behaviour affecting a development whose importance rivaled the splitting of the atom.

The panel — which advises parliament but cannot itself write new law — said the work at Scotland's Roslin Institute held mammoth potential, despite all the scare-mongering.

Among possible benefits: Greater understanding of the ageing process; the ability to regenerate tissues such as those destroyed in a heart attack; the production of medical proteins from the milk of genetically engineered animals; and the creation of better animal models for research into human disease.

"Our intention is not to deny that cloning faces us with moral dilemmas," it said. "(But) The development could bring many benefits."

## Palme's murder returns to the spotlight

STOCKHOLM (R) — The unsolved 1986 murder of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme has returned to the spotlight after a lawyer revealed a former client told him about a conspiracy to kill Mr. Palme and Sweden's king.

Lawyer Pelle Svensson said his client Lars Tingstrom, known as the bomb man after being convicted twice on explosion charges, disclosed on his deathbed in 1993 that he was a part of a gang of four involved in the murder.

He told Mr. Svensson in a confession, partly written and partly oral, that he planned the murder from his

prison cell to take revenge on a society he hated.

"It was Lars Tingstrom who ordered the murder. In total there were four people (involved) of whom two still are alive," Mr. Svensson told daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter.

Mr. Svensson told Swedish media the gang of four included Tingstrom, Christer Pettersson, who was convicted of Palme's murder in 1988 but later acquitted, a former bank robber and an explosives expert, now dead.

But Mr. Svensson said the primary target for the group was Sweden's King, Carl XVI Gustaf, not Palme.

He said it was pure chance that Palme was killed first, shot dead in a Stockholm street in February 1986 after leaving a cinema with his wife.

Mr. Svensson said it was Tingstrom's hatred of society that was the motive for the murder.

He claimed he was wrongly convicted when sent to prison for five years in 1979 for sending a letter bomb to a former business partner which exploded in the victim's hands.

While the court was dealing with the case, the prosecutor started a relationship with Tingstrom's fiancée and persuaded her to be a

witness against him.

In 1982, the prosecutor's house was blown up by a bomb, killing one person, and Tingstrom was imprisoned for life.

Mr. Svensson said it was while in prison that Tingstrom planned the murders of Palme and the king and knew his three alleged accomplices through the jail system.

The police have said new evidence was needed, such as the murder weapon itself, if new charges were to be brought against Pettersson.

Mr. Svensson has told media he knows where to find the gun.

## Russians upstage U.S. in summit propaganda war

HELSINKI (R) — The Russians have come but where are the Americans?

The Kremlin had a surprisingly slick and well-oiled media operation up and running at the Helsinki summit long before the U.S. delegation flew in, giving it centre stage while White House officials were still rehearsing their lines.

Russia may have lost the battle over NATO's plans to expand eastwards but it is going down with a flourish in the propaganda war, feeding a hungry media with tirades against U.S. policy on anything from visas to global security.

From a specially-created Russian media centre on the Finnish capital's waterfront, President Boris Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky has added panache and a rare human touch to the Kremlin as it rails against the West.

"President Yeltsin and the Russian leadership are convinced that NATO's plans to expand to the east could be the west's biggest strategic mistake since the end of the cold war," Mr. Yastrzhembsky said, setting the tone for the summit.

But taking a softer tone in almost the same breath, he told an eve-of-summit briefing that progress was possible between Mr. Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The seemingly contradictory signals encapsulated Russia's pre-summit stance of talking tough but leaving the door open to an accommodation with Washington.

Russia's delegation Wednesday and Thursday morning had the field all to itself. White House staff were nowhere to be seen and the Kremlin seized the opportunity with the world's media gathered and waiting.

The Kremlin wheeled out a string of leading lights to talk about media freedoms, battling the mafia and defending human rights in Russia.

Meanwhile, Mr. Yastrzhembsky answered questions in French, English and Russian as he strolled past reporters in the Russian media centre, wearing a sharp suit and looking well-groomed.

The Russian delegation's main office even included a

comfortable sofa from which Mr. Yastrzhembsky eased back into his umpteenth interview for a foreign television network.

With the world's television crews feeding from the same media centre, the Russians appeared hardly to miss a trick.

Although little of substance about the summit was revealed and other Russian officials were as distant from the media as ever, the Kremlin got its message across loud and clear.

By contrast, U.S. officials contacted Thursday morning were unable to say when they would have any briefings and had no information to offer, Mr. Clinton spokesman Mike McCurry planned a briefing in the late afternoon.

The Russian operation may not deter NATO from expanding into Eastern Europe and it may still not be perfect — some of the Russian speakers at the frequent briefings delivered long monologues which left little time for questions.

But it is nevertheless a personal triumph for Mr. Yastrzhembsky.

At 42, he has already enjoyed a successful career as a diplomat and Mr. Yeltsin plucked him from the post of ambassador to Slovakia after he was re-elected president last July. He earlier had a spell as head of the Foreign Ministry's Press and Information Department.

Like Mr. Yeltsin, a tennis and hunting fan, he appears to have settled down well into the Kremlin. He has introduced the practice of regular briefings in the Kremlin for foreign and Russian media.

He follows in the footsteps less of his immediate predecessor, Taciturn former journalist Sergei Medvedev, than Gennady Gerasimov, Foreign Ministry spokesman under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Mr. Gerasimov, who followed what he called the Sinatra doctrine of doing it "My Way", was not always ready to give much away but he was effective at presenting Russia's views.

## Burmese monks demand release of demonstrator

RANGOON (AFP) — Buddhist monks in Mandalay are threatening to return to the streets unless Burmese authorities release a monk arrested during anti-Muslim unrest, informed sources said Friday.

Monks were demanding the arrested man's release by the full moon Sunday, the sources said, though no details were known about the detained monk.

Residents reported that the city remained tense but calm, with a night curfew still in place in five townships and two townships across the Irrawaddy River.

Monks vandalised mosques and attacked Muslim-owned property including cars in unrest which began at the weekend, in apparent retribution for the attempted rape of a Buddhist girl earlier in month.

At least one novice monk was known to have died of gunshot wounds in the troubles and there was a heavy security presence in the city, diplomatic sources said.

One diplomat in Rangoon said demonstrations by Buddhist monks had spread from Mandalay to four more Burmese cities, but other diplomatic sources said they had no information on any unrest in those places.

A Burmese military intelligence source denied the report, saying there were "no demonstrations" or unrest in those cities and towns. Everything is normal.

A U.S. embassy officer who visited Mandalay to check the welfare of U.S. citizens there said there were many troops on some streets, particularly in Islamic community areas, an embassy spokesperson said.

The city was generally quiet. Some streets had been blocked off in Muslim areas, she said.

Informed sources in Mandalay noted that the movement of monks in and out of their monasteries were being monitored by security forces.

Monks from outlying areas were being prevented by authorities from coming to Mandalay, which is Burma's leading Buddhist centre, the sources said.

In Geneva, a U.N. rapporteur said in a report issued Friday Burma's people live in a climate of fear as serious human rights abuses continue with rural dwellers and those living near military strongholds particularly exposed.

## Hit squads feared searching for Korean defector — officials

MANILA (AFP) — Four Chinese and a Hong Kong man were stopped from entering the Philippines as part of an anti-terrorism clampdown ahead of the arrival of North Korean defector Hwang Jang-Yop, officials revealed Friday.

The five were found carrying questionable documents, including tampered visas or after they had stated "dubious reasons" for entering the country, said an immigration official at Manila International Airport.

They arrived at separate times late last week, officials said.

Immigration agents were warned to look out for possible terrorist assassination groups sent to the country ahead of Mr. Hwang's arrival from China Tuesday.

North Korea's top ideologue who defected at the South Korean embassy in Beijing on Feb. 12 went to the Philippines as part of a face-saving exercise to avoid embarrassing China with its old Stalinist ally.

Mr. Hwang, 74, is to go

on to South Korea after a stay in the Philippines which officials have said is not expected to last longer than two weeks.

Mr. Hwang was last seen Tuesday, boarding a van at the airport in the northern city of Baguio. The Philippine government has refused to give details on Mr. Hwang's whereabouts amid fears that North Korean agents may target him.

Photographs of known international assassins, including members of the Japanese Red Army have been posted at immigration offices.

Intelligence agents have been instructed to pay extra attention to bearers of Asian passports, particularly from China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam, the sources said.

Security at airports in the southern Philippines has also been tightened.

"It is very possible they (terrorists) may pass through either Malaysia or Indonesia en route to our country," said Aviation Security Command Director

Ibar Padua in the southern city of Zamboanga.

In Baguio, Mayor Mauricio Domogan said South Korean Ambassador Lee Chang-Choon arrived Thursday to visit Mr. Hwang.

Mr. Domogan said he was informed by other officials that Mr. Lee visited Baguio although he admitted that he did not meet the ambassador nor did he know what the envoy did in Baguio.

However South Korean press attache in Manila Nam Jin-Soo denied that the ambassador had left Manila Thursday or Friday.

The defection of Mr. Hwang, 74, the architect of Pyongyang's failed policy of self-reliance communism, put China in a bind between its old cold war ally, North Korea and its new trading partner, South Korea.

Allowing Mr. Hwang to fly to a third country before proceeding to South Korea was considered a gesture to North Korea.

## South Korean president's son probed over payoff rumours

SEOUL (R) — Police Friday raided the offices of a South Korean businessman in a probe into rumours that President Kim Young-Sam's son accepted a 200 billion won (\$226 million) kickback, prosecution officials said.

State prosecutors were looking into rumours that Kim Hyun-Chul took the money from the businessman acting as an agent for failed Hanbo Steel Co, they said.

"The purpose is to confirm rumours that Kim Hyun-Chul accepted 200 billion won (\$226 million)," one official told Reuters.

Hanbo Steel collapsed in January under debts of \$5.8 billion in the country's big-

gest corporate failure. Ten people, including a former cabinet minister, are on trial for bribery over improper loans to the steelmaker.

Parliament Friday kicked off an investigation into funding for Hanbo and will call Kim Hyun-Chul to testify.

The ruling New Korea Party agreed to the parliamentary inquiry after opposition parties attacked an earlier probe by prosecutors as a whitewash that failed to bring to justice leading players in the scandal.

The Justice Ministry announced Friday that the top prosecution investigator had been replaced.

Opposition parties have alleged that the president's

second son peddled influence to keep loans to Hanbo rolling in.

Kim Hyun-Chul issued an apology Monday for causing trouble and anxiety and said he was ready to accept punishment if he had done wrong. His father said on television last month he felt shamed his son had been linked to the Hanbo scandal.

The younger Kim has no official posts but is dubbed by newspapers the "crown prince" and played a leading role in his father's election in 1992.

State radio and other national broadcasters said the businessman, Park Tae-Joong, was a close associate of Kim Hyun-Chul and managed his money.

## Parliamentary sleaze row dogs Major

LONDON (R) — A report by a British parliamentary watchdog Thursday cleared 15 members of parliament of any wrongdoing but left a serious question mark hanging over 10 Conservative legislators.

The decision to defer a verdict on allegations that the 10 ruling party MPs broke rules against sleaze provoked a furious row between the government and the main opposition Labour Party.

Labour leader Tony Blair said there was no reason why the report could not be published before the May 1 election that Labour is strongly tipped to win.

Paddy Ashdown, minority Liberal Democrat leader, al-

so accused the government of a cover-up, saying: "The Conservatives have ended parliament as they started it — breaking their promises, trying to con people and mire in sleaze."

But senior Conservatives charged Labour, 25 points ahead in the polls, with resorting to smear tactics to distract attention from statistics showing the British economy was booming.

"They only created this report scare... When they suddenly saw the best economic news in terms of the dramatic fall in unemployment, and they decided they had to have some story to take it off the headlines," deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine said.

The 15 include Liberal Democrat deputy leader

Alan Beith, Doug Hoyle, the chairman of the parliamentary Labour Party, Defence Secretary Michael Portillo, former cabinet Minister David Mellor and Labour's health spokesman, Chris Smith.

Sir Gordon Downey, parliament's commissioner for standards, said that the case of these 15 was straightforward. They had not broken any parliamentary rules on declaring their income from outside parliament.

But the report said the investigation into allegations that MPs were paid by Mohammed Al-Fayed, the owner of London's up-market Harrods store, to ask questions in parliament on his behalf would not be finished until next week.



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## Majali's dual task

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's letter of designation to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to form a new government in the wake of the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti focussed attention on the internal situation of the country. Naturally, there were other policy issues that Dr. Majali's government was asked to manage. On top of conducting the next parliamentary elections, bringing about complete separation of the legislative branch from the executive branch, these issues include the commitment to the peace process, improving inter-Arab relations and consolidating the Kingdom's international standing. The thrust of the King's letter, though, was dedicated mainly to the local scene, especially the deteriorating state of the bureaucracy that His Majesty personally exposed on the heels of the "orphange scandal."

With this in mind the Monarch called for the formation of a Cabinet made up of qualified ministers to set the stage for overhauling the bureaucracy from head to toe.

The new prime minister responded instantly and positively to the challenges outlined by the King by forming a team that is capable of carrying out the mandate set out in the letter of designation. The composition of the new Cabinet should therefore be regarded as an example of the extent of Dr. Majali's willingness and readiness to faithfully translate his new mandate with determination into practical steps and then reality.

During his first press conference after being sworn in, Dr. Majali expressed the view that the external situation has so stabilised that the country can afford to look inward to make the necessary changes. We still have some problems of course as far as the peace process is concerned since it has not come to full fruition on all fronts and levels, as in fact the prime minister himself pointed out. But all know that the two tasks, synchronising our foreign with our internal policies and preparing for any and all eventualities, are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary they are mutually reinforcing and as such they have to go hand in hand in being tackled.

The fact that there is a great deal to be done on the external front does not mean that we cannot start in earnest the task of dealing with the mushrooming local concerns starting with reducing the bureaucracy, poverty and unemployment. We have never thought that cleaning up our own backyard must await the resolution of all outstanding work beyond in any case.

Dr. Majali is a veteran statesman who is capable of conducting his mission on the two fronts simultaneously. We are hopeful and confident that the prime minister and his team will give their best towards achieving their goals.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON the appointment of Abdul Salam Majali to lead a new government in Jordan, a writer for Al Ra'i said that Dr. Majali will no doubt pursue efforts he had started in his previous government to improve relations with the Gulf states and, at the same time, follow the course of reforming the national economy. Mahmud Rimawi said that the outgoing Kabariti government had followed Dr. Majali's previous policies, especially in mending fences with the other Arab states, and there is no doubt that in his new government Dr. Majali will pursue the same sound course, in compliance with the King's directives. He said that the King has directed Dr. Majali to give impetus to the peace process, strengthen Jordan's relations with the other Arab states, carry out reforms and end the inefficiency in the public administration system in Jordan. The writer said that as a first step, Dr. Majali, acting upon earlier Royal directives, has chosen his ministers from amongst technocrats and excluded Parliament members; there is no doubt that he is determined to abide by the other Royal directives to attain the country's aspired goals.

A WRITER for Al Dustour commented on the Baqoura shooting incident by saying that as a rule, Jordanians are against the killing of innocent people or enemies to the nation. But it has to be noted, said Fakhr Kassar, that every Israeli, young or old, is considered an accomplice to the Israeli government and Israeli armed forces which are pursuing aggression on Arab lands, killing the Arab children and demolishing Arab houses. The writer said that every Jew living on Palestinian soil must take part in stopping the aggression and the act of killing of Arabs rather than remain passive in the face of Benjamin Netanyahu's atrocities. He said that perhaps the Jordanian soldier who attacked the Israeli vacationers wanted to vent to a great deal of anger and repression in his heart against the Israeli occupiers of Arab lands. While reviewing the event of the past week, the writer said one has to bear in mind that Israeli soldiers who were declared as mentally deranged had previously committed a series of murders against innocent Palestinian civilians.

## Jordanian Perspective

# Majali government — no easy ride, but competent and serious about the tasks at hand

By Dr. Musa Kellani

THE ABRUPT change in government caught many of us by surprise. But, come to think of it, it should not have been surprising. Every one of us in Jordan is part of an ongoing process of modernisation and improvement under a consistent policy and programme and has a role in contributing to that process. Some of us need more time to clearly understand what that role is while others realise and adjust themselves to that reality at a very early stage. In that sense, it does not really matter who occupies the chair of the prime minister at any given point in time. The overriding understanding and appreciation has always been and will remain to be that all of us are working for the cause of our country.

The new prime minister, Abdul Salam Majali, faces tough challenges at all levels. As he himself pledged in his letter of acceptance, in reply to the letter of designation from His Majesty the King, his government must ensure fair and free parliamentary elections and continue the economic reform under way in the country since 1989.

On both counts, the rules of the game are clearly drawn. The one-person, one-vote election law will govern the legislative polls this year while there could be changes in the structure of electoral districts and constituencies. Indeed those changes will draw heavy criticism from those who might perceive their chances of election or reelection as being targeted by the changes. That is one point of friction between the Majali government and any other government will have to reckon with it. At the same time, the executive authority has the comfort of knowing that it will not have to come under such attacks from the Parliament floor because it is highly unlikely that the legislature is going to be convened for an extraordinary session in the run-up to the elections. But the criticism is definitely going to be severe.

Moreover, we know that the person of Dr. Majali is strong enough to ride over such criticism, given the successful mission he accomplished by negotiating Jordan's peace treaty with Israel despite the clamour from opponents of peace in 1994.

We have little doubt that Dr. Majali will also be successful in ensuring free and fair elections to Parliament.

He does not have to draw up new plans and strategies to do so. All he has to do is to follow the election law, and related regulations, to the letter, which we all know he will.

As to the economic reform programme, we are all now assured that it has been institutionalised and the toughest challenges it posed to any government is over now with the remodelling of subsidies for wheat and fodder. In fact the programme, as the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently pointed out, is no longer an IMF-prescribed plan; it is a Jordanian blueprint supported by Jordanian determination to achieve self-reliance and implemented by Jordanians with goals and objectives that go far beyond those envisaged or expected by the IMF. The continued presence of Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf in the new government and the appointment of Suleiman Hafez, who served as number two in the Ministry of Finance, as minister of finance, and of Hani Al Mulki, a man of not only great talent and proven record but also wide liberal approach, as minister of industry and trade are clearly designed to ensure the continuity of Jordan's quest to put its economic house in order. Crowning the effort will be Bassem Saket, who has taken over the portfolios of transport and telecommunications, two key areas that need continued overhauling. Dr. Saket's forward-looking ideas and commitment to liberalisation of all sectors of the economy are well known, and it is no accident that he finds himself on the saddle as Jordan is poised to privatise the telecommunications and transport sectors in the next few years.

Administrative reform is an area of serious challenge, on the internal front, to Dr. Majali, or any head of government in Jordan, simply because of the enormity and complex peculiarities of our society. No prime minister could realistically expect to maintain his popularity once he turns his attention to reforming the civil service. We will have to watch closely how far Dr. Majali and his team are willing to go in this direction or whether they would throw political caution to the wind and pull all the plugs to weed out our civil service.

Perhaps the most difficult task that awaits Dr. Majali on

the external front is ensuring that the Middle East peace process remains on track. The reason is quite simple: It is not Jordan's actions that threaten the peace process but Israel's high-handed approach to the Palestinians. And repeated Jordanian advice and warnings to the Israeli government do not seem to have any serious impact on its ill-founded determination to give the Palestinians as little as possible or almost nothing in a final settlement. The Majali government will have to draw on every iota of imagination to somehow convince the Israeli government that its present approach is not at all realistic if the objective is comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

As to Jordan's relations with other Arab countries, particularly Iraq and Kuwait, things are moving indeed in the right direction. Dr. Majali, by design or coincidence, seems to have built a strong ground for him in the context of Iraq when he met with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz at an informal dinner in Amman two months ago. Definitely, the ideas that the two men exchanged on that evening could be a clear basis for removing the nuances in the Amman-Baghdad relationship, but Iraq cannot simply expect Jordan to drop its principled stand and its concern for the suffering of the Iraqi people for the sake of improving relations.

As for Kuwait, things are moving but no one can ascertain with conviction that the Kuwaiti mind has indeed accepted the truth that Jordan's position vis-à-vis the Gulf crisis was based on genuine concern for the future of the Arab World. If it has not, then it is definitely a matter of time before it hopefully does.

In sum, the Majali government can expect a largely smooth sailing on many issues but also serious challenges on several tracks. It is also clear that the seriousness of the challenges could be diluted or strengthened by political events in the weeks and months to come.

However, the appointment of the Majali government has partly cleared many uncertainties surrounding life in Jordan, and we wish the next Council of Ministers every luck in successfully accomplishing its mission as outlined in the King's letter of designation.

## THE WEEK IN PRINT

# 'Government change should reflect on performance'

REVIEWED BY  
**ELIA NASRALLAH**

THE LOCAL Arabic dailies last week tackled the change of government in Jordan, domestic issues and the developments in Palestine in light of Israel's decision to build a Jewish settlement in the Arab Jerusalem area.

A writer for Al Dustour commented on the change of government by saying that the change itself does not achieve the aspired development and improvement and it is important for the new government to chart new policies, especially for dealing with the domestic ills.

Mohammad Daoud said there is need for change not only of persons but also in the role assigned each department, legislation and the manner of performance of the public administration system.

Once a clear-cut plan has been drawn up, the concerned ministries or heads of departments will have to abide by it, but it is the duty of the legislative, as well as the executive authority, to monitor the system's performance and achievements on a permanent basis.

Musa Subeishi, a writer for Al Ra'i, said the outgoing prime minister has been in the spotlight ever since King Hussein designated him to form a government and carry out the so-called "white revolution".

Abdul Karim Kabariti's performance was watched by the so-called old guard, but it was clear and transparent and he did not shirk any responsibility nor did he try to escape the task of addressing a public issue or the result of a government decision, said the writer.

He has shown courage before Parliament and the media and defended his government's various economic and other decisions and also defended his colleagues in the Cabinet, said the writer.

Mr. Kabariti was not always right, but he was the dynamic personality needed to deal with the issues facing Jordan presently and for this he deserves respect and appreciation, said the writer, adding that 13 months of government could not achieve much albeit it had good intentions and ambitious plans for change.

A writer for Al Dustour said that Mr. Kabariti had great ambitions to serve his country, but the burden was too heavy for him and he failed to make influential friends help

him with his mission.

Jihad Momani said that Mr. Kabariti was faced with the task of pursuing the economic restructuring programme, which resulted in the bread crisis, and was determined to carry out a political restructuring programme. In both cases, said the writer, Mr. Kabariti invited trouble for himself on the domestic front.

His adamant stand vis-à-vis Iraq and his failure to mend fences with other Arab states brought him another headache, on the external front, said the writer, adding that while respecting Mr. Kabariti's efforts to improve Jordan's image on the external front and address domestic economic ills, it has to be said that the current political situation in the region was instrumental in ending his mandate.

A writer for Al Ra'i urged the concerned government authorities to expose the identity of criminals and outlaws by publishing their names and photos, so that the society can take precaution against them.

It would be most positive for the public to know the identity of persons convicted for murder, robbery or other crimes and publishing them is bound to deter others from committing crimes for fear of exposure, said the writer Nazih.

Indeed, he said, exposing the evil doers is a way of providing social security for the Jordanian society, something which successive governments in Jordan have been trying to achieve. The writer said that concealing the identity of the criminals has not helped curtail the number of crimes against society.

A writer for Al Ra'i discussed the role of private hospitals in Jordan, commending the high quality of their services to Jordanians and other nationals.

Mohammad Asfour praised those doctors who pooled their resources and established hospitals offering different specialisations to the community. But he said that these private hospitals still lack the research and nurse training centres and have so far failed to link their work to the programmes of the medical colleges in Jordanian universities.

This failure has kept them somewhat detached from the needs of the local community and gave the public the impression that all that they are interested in is to make

profits at any cost.

While appreciating the high level of service Jordanian specialists offer, the writer said the private hospitals, where they work are still isolated from and have failed to set up back-up medical services and have failed to interact most effectively with the local community.

Commenting on Israel's building of a new Jewish settlement near Arab Jerusalem, a writer for Al Ra'i daily said the move dealt a severe blow to all Israel's partners in the peace process.

Fahed Faneh said the Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu resorted to building the settlement in a bid to strengthen his position at the domestic front and to win the favour of the Jewish extremists and all the Arab Nation did so far was to condemn Israel's action.

The Palestinians can resort to another intifada which is more effective on Israel's society than all the condemnations of the world, said the writer. He added that the Palestine National Authority should release all the detainees known to have fought against the Israeli occupation and the peace process to carry out the intifada.

Furthermore, he said the Arab countries can show their solidarity with the Palestinians by resorting to the oil weapon and declaring a programme of gradual decrease in oil exports, at one per cent weekly, to pressure the world into forcing Israel to abide by the requirements of peace.

Another writer for Al Ra'i daily attacked the Israeli justice minister who was reported to have threatened to evict the PNA from its homeland.

Hazem Mubieddin said that with all rudeness and arrogance the minister has been issuing threats against the Palestine leadership for opposing Israel's plans to build a Jewish settlement near Arab Jerusalem and creating new tension in the region.

This minister is obviously voicing the views of the Likud-led government whose illegal actions in Palestine have drawn severe criticism and condemnation by the world community, he added.

The writer said that such statements can only come from unstable personalities and shaky governments which are against peace, stability and security.

## LETTERS

### For children's sake

To the Editor:

HIS MAJESTY crossed barriers for us again last Sunday, by going to visit the families of the dead Israeli girls, accompanied by HRH Prince Faisal and HRH Princess Aisha in military uniform, showing the capable but very human (and pretty) face of the Jordanian army. As His Majesty ate bread and salt, offered by elders before kneeling (so soon after operations on both his knees) to speak to the bereaved families with compassion and friendship, he demonstrated the strength of human values yet again. Israeli TV showed the reactions of men and women on the street; they all spoke of him as a real King among men, even those who spoke of entrenched hatred. One woman (otherwise strongly Likud) said that Netanyahu was also to blame for what had happened, through constantly upping the ante and rekindling hatred.

Having the courage to be human takes strength and the vision to see beyond immediate rewards. Time and again His Majesty has shown those who could have been enemies with compassion and acceptance and moving on to more constructive ends. The night of the trip to Israel, His Majesty got Netanyahu and Arafat talking again. During the press conference that night, persistent Israeli reporters (and others) were repeatedly told that work would start on Har Homa this week. However, the negotiations with the Palestinians will also go on. The bulldozers and the Israeli army

are now poised on Jabal Abu Ghneim where Faisal Al Hussein is camped.

Coming after the day that the Israeli justice minister threatened Arafat with eviction from Gaza as a countermeasure to any "intransigence", continuing dialogue seems to be our foremost hope. The threat to expel Arafat, though violent, is predictable. What power base does Arafat have in Israeli eyes? To us he represents a people who have been wronged by a long chain of tragic "alterations" in the course of history, and the many graves marking the passage of idealistic and passionate young men and women who sacrificed themselves for Palestine. The memory of the losses is a torment and the significance of Jerusalem is branded in our consciousness.

The "Realpolitik" of our situation is that the dream of Palestine as it was is long gone — and it pains me to think this — but the work must go on. HRH Crown Prince Hassan's trip to Gaza to meet with Arafat underlined the Jordanian commitment to Palestinian rights within the context of the unified Arab stand that Jordan has consistently worked for. It is our hope that this Jordanian endeavour to awaken the moral interpretation of peace within Israel will be successful. At the end of the day, it is "for the sake of the children" that we must fight the hard battles of this uneasy peace.

Diala Al Jabri,  
 Amman.

### Admirable statesman

To the Editor:

THOSE OF us old enough to have watched almost 70 years of the sad history of the Middle East have great respect for His Majesty King Hussein. Of all the leaders in that troubled area, he has best exemplified reason and a rational approach to the solution of its problems. His latest visit to Israel and the families of the killed children demonstrates his com-

passion and understanding and is a bold and courageous step to still the anger.

We in the West who observe from great distance are not surprised at his move. It simply exemplifies the type of man whom we have long admired as the one statesman within the area.

L.K. Weber,  
 Commander,  
 U.S. Navy (Ret.)

### Proud and noble leader

To the Editor:

KING HUSSEIN's visit to the bereaved families of Israeli schoolgirls showed not only compassion or conveyed Jordan's condolences to the families of the victims, but also the King's genuine pain at the loss of innocent lives.

In this case, like in so many previous

ones, the King proved his courage and bravery. To kneel in front of a victim's mother and still remain dignified and proud is the mark of a great man. And the King is that and more: an able leader and forever a magnanimous human being.

Tayseer Nazmi,  
 Amman.

### Objectivity, please

To the Editor:

AS A regular viewer of "60 Minutes" — the "news" programme on Friday, I was deeply touched by His Majesty's very generous gesture towards the orphans in the institute portrayed.

On the other hand, I found the presentation of what should have been a news report overdramatised, cheap and somewhat far from the truth, as anyone will tell you who has visited the place.

The supervisor who was interviewed would do well in one of the local series on TV.

I can only hope that an important news programme such as this would actually search for facts (a reporter's job), stick to them and not introduce false ones to serve certain purposes that perhaps we, the public, are unaware of.

Eileen Pitt,  
 Amman.



# Tony Blair: I know what the country needs and I think I can do that

Leader of the opposition Labour Party Tony Blair believes that the clash between the left and the right is no longer a key issue in Britain and that the main achievement for the future of the country will be to equip people for the modern world in economic and social terms and rebuild the welfare state. Following is an interview conducted by Daphne Barak with the British MP at his headquarters in Sedgefield, near Newcastle.

**Question:** If I had to describe you in one sentence...

**Answer:** I am Tony Blair and I lead a Labour Party that has changed tremendously. It is modern and has the ideas and the energy to take our country into the future and we have had the courage to change ourselves. I believe we now have the ability to change the country.

**Q:** Do you feel confident or scared that you just might lose at the last moment?

**A:** You have got to be careful not to be complacent and we are not complacent at all. But, the reason we have been doing so well recently is because we have changed. We are leading the centre ground of politics and that is very important. We are also leading part of a movement that is happening all over the world where the centre-left politicians are redefining their politics and making it more relevant, more modern and as a result, I think, it is more attractive to people.

**Q:** In America they describe you as the "British Clinton." Would you agree with that?

**A:** Well, there are obvious similarities between our wives' professions. If I could win through elections I would be very pleased, but I think that American and British politics are very different. We are trying to do some of the same things: improve education and welfare and put a tougher crime policy high on the agenda. We are also alike in that we are both determined to make our countries outward looking.

**Q:** I understand you are using George Stephanopoulos, Clinton's ex-aid, as an adviser.

**A:** Well, I do not think he has actually advised us, but we have close relations with Clinton's Democrats and a lot of the changes that we have been through have been very similar, but that is all part of the change for the centre parties. After the Thatcher/Reagan years they really had to renew themselves and get back into the political mainstream, and become far more vibrant and intelligent political forces and we have done that largely.

**Q:** Why do you want to be prime minister?

**A:** Because I believe that my country needs change and I think it is the type of

change I want to give them.

**Q:** Is one of the changes going to include the royal family? Do you think England needs a royal family?

**A:** Yes, I would prefer a monarchy rather than to move to a presidential system. We are very comfortable with the monarchy. The Queen is very popular... Why not?

**Q:** Well, the newspapers certainly do very well out of the monarchy.

**A:** Yes, although not always in the right way, but there is a tremendous feeling in Britain. Britain is a country of enormous history and tradition and I respect and like that, but it is important that you draw the best out of your tradition but make sure that you are still relevant in a world that is completely different. The role of women in society is different. Technology is transforming the workplace. We live in a global economy today. It requires new ideas and different ways of thinking. The core belief of today's Labour Party is that we want a society where people are equipped for this modern world in economic terms and social terms. Where we are building what I call a one nation society, where opportunity and the ability to get on and do well is shared by all and where order and decency prevail.

**Q:** Should Britain be part of Europe or more independent?

**A:** My belief is Britain should be a part of Europe. It is absolutely essential for Britain to be a strong and leading player in Europe and I am a great fan of the United States and a great supporter of the transatlantic relationship between Britain and the United States, but I believe that the relationship could actually be strengthened if Britain is also strong in Europe.

**Q:** Describe a day in the life of Tony Blair during campaigning.

**A:** Well, there is no ordinary day at the moment. As the elections are not really properly started, we are just waiting. It is a painful experience for both myself and the prime minister as there is a lot of preparation time and then we are out on the road obviously campaigning heavily. There are speeches to make and then I can come up here into the constituency.

**Q:** How often do you come here?

**A:** I come quite a lot. We come as a family for holiday times. When parliament was not sitting I used to come virtually every month, but it is not so easy to do nowadays.

**Q:** Is this what you call home?

**A:** This is where my roots are because actually this is a few miles from where I was brought up as a child. So it was a great thrill to come back and represent it.

**Q:** Are family values a factor in your campaign?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** I did not see you exposing your family like we are used to in America?

**A:** No, well I do not like to expose my family if I can help it because I think they are my family, they are not a sort of political showcase and it is maybe slightly different too. My wife does not want a political career. She is happy doing what she is doing. She is a successful lawyer and that is great and my children are young. I feel very much for the children and people who are in the public eye a lot because it can be very hard. I want them to lead as normal a life as possible.

**Q:** Is your wife going to continue to be a lawyer if you are elected?

**A:** I do not see any reason why not. People often ask this question, but when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister, no one said that Dennis should give up work. In these days of equality I believe it should work the same way.

**Q:** Is she going to play any role as a First Lady?

**A:** No, because we do not have the first lady concept here. We have a Queen and therefore we do not need a president or a first lady.

**Q:** What did you want to be when you were a small child?

**A:** A footballer. I was crazy about football, still am.

**Q:** Do you still play?

**A:** I play occasionally with my kids or anyone

who lets me, out in the park. I support Newcastle United, a team that plays just near here.

**Q:** What about your musical career?

**A:** Well, I was in a rock band for a while. It was great fun. I loved doing it.

**Q:** Do you still play the guitar?

**A:** I play the guitar occasionally.

**Q:** Last time I was here they talked about your hairdo.

**A:** I do not know how much these things count for. I know it made the headlines, but in terms of public votes I do not think people find it relevant. People want to know what you can do for the country.

**Q:** How do you fight an opponent that has no financial problems?

**A:** We do actually have a big deficit problem in Britain and I think it is quite important to realise that although people are doing better now than they were a few years ago, they have not forgotten that it was this government that took them into recession. I believe this has bred a feeling of insecurity. People have a feeling now that they are doing better for reasons that have nothing to do with the government.

**Q:** Do you remember the day you decided to become a politician?

**A:** Not really. It did not quite happen like that. I was interested in politics when I was at university, but I was not very active

and then I joined the Labour Party. It was some years later that I decided to be an MP.

**Q:** How do you define a politician?

**A:** I think they come in many shapes and sizes.

**Q:** Let us talk about you.

**A:** Well, I am driven. I have certain beliefs. I am not obsessed by politics particularly, but I think there are certain things that the country can do better and I believe that I can help do that and so I suppose I am very much a conviction-based politician.

**Q:** What is your main asset?

**A:** I hope it is that I have got a clear vision of what I want to achieve for the country. I think I know where Britain has to be in the modern world. The politics of a large part of the last 20, 30 even 40 years belongs to an era that has gone and we need actually a different political approach which is based not so much on the clash between right and left in the fundamental sense, but is much more about concentrating certain specific change. Economically, we need to equip the country for the future and socially we must rebuild the welfare state.

**Q:** Is there any truth to the rumour that Princess Diana is getting involved in your campaign?

**A:** No, not that I know of. Politicians get used to things being printed about

them. Journalists will say just about anything regarding the royal family. You have to take all the stories pretty much with a pinch of salt.

**Q:** If you are not elected this time, are you going to continue running?

**A:** Well, I always say when I am asked that question that that is a bridge I will cross when I come to it and that is, really, I think, a sensible answer at this stage in an election campaign.

**Q:** What do you think will happen to you "the day after"?

**A:** Well, if we are elected, I think I will know what I want to do. I have got a very clear sense of what I want to achieve. I may be wrong in that and people may not vote for it, but I know what I want. I know what I wanted for the Labour Party. I knew how it had to be changed. I knew how it had to be transformed and I know what the country needs and I think I can do that. I believe that I can do that, so I am not going to wake up the morning after the election and say: "My God, what do I do now?" I will know what to do. If we lose, well, that's a different matter.

## King leaves for U.S.

(Continued from page 1) entrusted to them, as we have always known them, with honour and discipline. This will be done without prejudice in any way to any of the rights of the members of the Desert Force.

"I salute you, and express to you the sincere affection of you brother, supreme commander, and comrade in arms, and I pray God to grant us success in our endeavours." In a development related to the Baqoura attack, the Jerusalem Post reported on Thursday that there was no agreement between Jordan and Israel over the evacuation of wounded from the area, which Israel calls Naharayim.

The Post quoted Internal Security Minister Avidor

Kahalani as telling the Knesset (parliament) that he was also not aware of a ministry of education policy not to allow schoolchildren to visit the area.

"The answer to the question of why the Jordanians did not allow us to evacuate the wounded girls after the shooting attack is that the discussions between Jordan and Israel on 'evacuation arrangements' had not been concluded and the matter has not been closed

between the two countries," said Mr. Kahalani, who was replying to questions on the Knesset floor.

Under the October 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, the Kingdom allowed free access to unarmed Israelis to the Baqoura area during the day. Israeli farmers also work in the evacuated area, but they have to leave the site before sunset.

## Clinton condemns attack

(Continued from page 1)

condemned the attack in a telegram to his Israeli counterpart David Levy.

The Italian foreign ministry said the country felt "a deep horror and consternation following this new bloody attack."

"Today like yesterday, Italy condemns terrorism utterly and without reserve. There is no political motivation of any nature that can justify acts of indiscriminate barbarity," a statement said.

The Arab League was more

circumspect over the blast, voicing regret, but stressing that the blast was the result of Israel's "provocative" policies.

"The Arab League is sorry for the loss of innocent lives... which is the expected result of the provocative action of the Israeli government in Jerusalem and occupied Arab territories," spokesman Talaat Hamed said.

"Israel's illegal settlement policies fanned the flames of anger in the Arab and Muslim World," Mr. Hamed said.

He recalled that the 22-member

pan-Arab organisation had "warned the Israeli government that its policies will lead to violence and counter-violence."

"Such action (the blast) should be a clear signal to Mr. Netanyahu to backtrack on the settlement schemes and return to the table of negotiations which is the only way to peace," Mr. Hamed said.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak telephoned his Israeli counterpart Ezer Weizman to express his condolences for the bomb attack.

"Acts of violence and the murder of innocent people are

not compatible with the principles of peace," Mr. Mubarak told Mr. Weizman, the Egyptian news agency MENA reported.

In Ankara, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said: "We strongly condemn this bombing which has caused the death and injury of innocent people."

"We have always emphasised that no objective can be reached through terrorism and violence," it added.

"We sincerely support the continuation of the Middle East peace process and the efforts towards peace and tranquillity in the region," the ministry said.

## Suicide blast kills 4 in Tel Aviv

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli television said responsibility for the bombing was claimed by an anonymous male caller from Hamas which, along with Islamic Jihad, led a series of anti-Israeli bombings a year ago, killing more than 50 people.

At the blast scene, a six-month-old girl in a red-and-blue clown costume, her head red with blood and her arms raised, screamed as a policeman carried her away. A crying woman held up bloodied hands. Two pre-schoolers, one dressed as a clown, the other as a cowboy, ran away. Wounded people were treated

on the sidewalk as more ambulances raced to the scene.

The bomb had been studded with nails for greater deadliness.

Earlier, in Hebron, Israeli soldiers fired tear-gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition into a crowd of more than 1,000 stone-throwing Palestinians protesting construction of the Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. One soldier was hit by a firebomb and his uniform went up in flames. Two Palestinians were shot and wounded.

Israel and the Palestinians blamed each other for the violence, which was preceded by two days of protests in the West Bank.

"The terror of bulldozers led to the terror of explosives," said Arafat advisor Ahmad Tibi of the blast.

Asked if his decision to go ahead with the Jewish settlement might have contributed to the violence, Mr. Netanyahu said angrily: "I find that line of questioning ohnoxious and immoral."

Mr. Netanyahu suggested that he might suspend peace talks, saying, "we are not prepared to go on this way."

Israeli soldiers, meanwhile, raided a house in a West Bank village which may have been the home of the suicide bomber.

The army surrounded and entered a house in the village of Surif, outside Hebron, the witnesses said.

The police in Tel Aviv said earlier they found the identity papers of a 28-year-old Palestinian from Surif near the downtown cafe that was ripped apart by the blast, but did not reveal his name.

In Surif, neighbours said the raided house belonged to Musa Abdul Qader Abu Diya, 28, who had a permit from security forces to enter Israel for his job at a restaurant in Tel Aviv.

There was no official announcement by the army explaining why it entered the village, which lies in an area under Palestinian civilian control but joint Israeli-Palestinian security responsibility.

The soldiers entered Surif in the evening and were met by Palestinian youths who pelted them with stones. They declared a curfew in the town and continued to sporadic melees with the protesters while surrounding the Abu Diya home.

Family members were present to the home during the raid, but the army prevented journalists from approaching the house.

Hamas followers cheered Friday when news of the attack spread.

"I have good news for you," a Hamas leader, Hamed Bitawi, told a crowd of 10,000 supporters at a rally in the West Bank town of Nablus. "There is a suicide operation in Tel Aviv." The crowd clapped and responded with shouts of "Allahu Akbar."

Israel sealed the West Bank and Gaza Strip, barring all Palestinians from entering Israel.

In Hebron, when protesters gathered a few metres from the settler compound of Beit Hadassah, soldiers fired live bullets in the air to keep them at bay. Israeli troops ordered settlers to stay indoors.

"Now it is a war of the people, not of diplomacy. We want to teach Bibi a lesson that when he challenges an entire nation, he cannot win," said Hebron stone thrower Khalil Qawasmeleh, 17, using Mr. Netanyahu's nickname.

Chaos followed the 1:45 p.m. (11:45 GMT) explosion at Tel Aviv's Agrippa coffee house on Ben Gurion boulevard.

A waiter said he saw a man walk onto the patio among the tables, carrying two bags.

"I was trying to pick up an order," the waiter, Gad Ben-Tzur, told the Associated Press. "A second later, there was a tremendous flash and he blew up."

The waiter said about 20 or 30 people were nearby. The explosion left splinters of chairs, tables and umbrellas jumbled together. Smoke rose from scorched piles of wood and cloth.

The blackened body of the attacker lay at the scene for several hours, partially, cov-



Shukri Sarhan

## Actor Sarhan passes away

CAIRO (AFP) — Shukri Sarhan, the well-known Egyptian actor died in Cairo at the age of 72 and his body was laid to rest Thursday in a Cairo cemetery.

Sarhan, who had spent 50 years in acting, was a popular figure. He appeared in 150 movies and along with Ms. Faten Hamameh was considered as the best actor in Egyptian cinema history during celebrations in December of Egypt's 100 years in the cinema industry.

During that celebrations, in which he was duly honoured for his achievements Sarhan had looked quite fit and healthy.

# Nile Cruise

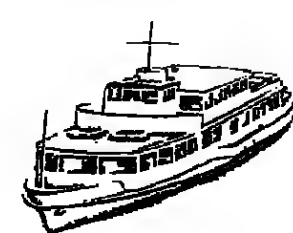
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**By Dominic Evans**  
*Reuters*

dan's economy.

Revenues last year rose around 10 per cent to \$770 million, a modest increase compared to the \$500 million which Jordan says has been invested in hotels and transport since it signed a

"Maybe for the first few days we noticed a drop," he told Reuters. "But now it is behind us." He said border crossings at the southern Eilat-Aqaba checkpoint with Israel were back to normal.

CHICAGO (AFP) —

GM spokesman Gerry Holmes voiced hope that the strike could be averted but said he had no word on the status of the talks, which focus on the first independent contract

A shutdown of DRA

averted a strike when it reached agreement on a new contract that contained most of the provisions in contracts negotiated by the UAW with other companies.

GM was meanwhile pressing on with talks to end a strike at its full-size pickup truck plant in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The stoppage over staffing levels needed for new generations of GM pickup trucks due to be produced next year began exactly a week ago.

# JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles.  
One letter to each square, to form  
four ordinary words.

**LOHLE**

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**PHEES**

**ENTABE**

**VOCLEN**

**Print answer here : A**

**Paging Miss Writers—**



YOU MIGHT CALL  
A BEAUTY PAGEANT  
DANCE THIS.

Now arrange the circled letters to  
form the surprise answer, as sug-  
gested by the above cartoon.

!

(Answers tomorrow)

**Yesterday's**

**Jumbles:**

**Answer:**

**PENCE EMERY ICEBOX ALBINO**

The detectives wanted the maid to —  
**COME CLEAN**

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (15/03/1997 - 19/03/1997)

WEEKLY REPORT

ING THE LAST 3 WEEKS	COMPANY NAME	P/E	OTV	NO. OF CONTRACT SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TOTAL NUMBER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS	
LOW				EXECUTED										
480	460 CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	17.7	0.00	7	5065	2317	.46	.44	.62	.44	-.02	625	252	3
480	480 JOR. TRAFF. FAC.	12.8	0.00	11	7150	7545	.60	.58	.68	.48	-.40	685	175	5
480	400 ARAB FIB. INVT.	-	0.00	76	80750	33398	.40	.47	.60	.62	+.02	412	008	5
730	460 UNION INT. 50%	66.0	0.00	20	51621	9808	.70	.65	.65	.49	-.01	190	235	5
850	850 JOR. P.B. INTV. CO. 75%	-	0.00	9	50800	12036	.05	.89	.77	-.08	.578	580	2	5
850	40 AL-DALATYAT 75%	14.7	0.00	7	5850	3830	.60	.85	.65	.61	.408	068	2	5
480	35-SHARQ INT. 75%	-	0.00	4	1250	728	1.00	.95	.77	.78	-.42	550	016	5
480	460 ARAB FOOD & MED.	-	0.00	9	2212	1857	.55	.59	.57	.57	.02	570	092	3
480	560 ARAB INTL. INT. TRD.	-	0.00	17	66670	30670	.46	.45	.47	.43	-.01	628	134	4
560	200 JOR. 3RD. HAICH-TENCO	-	0.00	21	21650	6927	.21	.16	.21	.16	-.03	530	103	4
560	3.750 ARAB STEEL PIPES	9.8	0.00	4	94	3600	2.75	3.60	2.60	2.60	-.15	3600	004	1
480	1.360 BAKL. CIGARETTES	41.0	0.00	35	19585	27222	1.39	1.29	1.39	1.29	-	1290	272	5
480	530 NAL. TEXTILE	-	0.00	23	7100	2536	.51	.52	.69	.69	.02	690	284	3
480	600 BAYKAL OILS & HOULDS	-	0.00	7	3150	1898	.60	.59	.57	.59	-.01	384	217	3
480	600 BIKESAT PIRMA. 75%	-	0.00	6	21500	11473	.42	.43	.61	.62	-.01	264	222	2
710	710 JORDAN STEEL	-	0.00	45	21536	28533	.74	.74	.72	.76	-	727	212	5
760	530 ARAB ELECT. INDS.	160.4	0.00	3	594	202	.51	.51	.51	.51	-	908	010	1
820	860 UNION TOBACCO 75%	-	0.00	7	1856	3099	.96	.94	.94	.94	-.05	706	021	6
820	505 RAB. PUNSH. 65%	-	0.00	17	18205	4410	.55	.60	.55	.59	-	383	182	3
480	400 INDS. ENG.	35.9	0.00	32	28465	12081	.42	.41	.41	.42	-	435	066	5
480	760 INDS. CERAMIC	-	0.00	7	7234	5527	.76	.77	.76	.76	-	766	101	1
800	660 PEARL SAK. P. CONV.	-	0.00	3	146	95	.44	.67	.67	.67	-.03	651	004	1
820	680 BAK. POLYMER	-	0.00	3	7100	5055	.69	.70	.69	.69	-	693	073	1
820	650 KID. LANE COMPLEX	9.4	0.00	282	015800	465209	.74	.86	.73	.80	+.06	796	379	5
820	700 ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	59.7	0.00	3	5070	6210	.87	.85	.85	.05	-.02	050	083	2
820	410 KATL. MUT. ENG. HAMICO	-	0.00	81	160750	63641	.42	.44	.42	.44	-.02	431	536	5

GRAND TOTAL 827 1404704 938820

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## EQUESTRIAN ROUNDUP Bisharat impressive at Al Basel Championship

By Ibrahim Haddadin in Damascus  
and Roufan Nahhas in Amman

JORDAN'S HANI BISHARAT Friday added a new victory to his long list of achievements Friday by taking second place at Al Basel International Equestrian Championship currently underway in Damascus.

Riding Al Zaeem, Bisharat had a total of 26 points in the hit and run competition clocking 62.16 seconds, successfully passing seven hurdles out of twelve. Egypt's Kureem Zu'bi took first place with 27 points clocking 62 seconds. Syria's Shadi Gharib was third with 24 points.

The hit and run competition consists of twelve hurdles in which the competitors have to successfully overcome hurdles as well as beat the clock. Two points are given in case of a successful jump and one point otherwise.

Meanwhile, Jordan's Saed Kilani scored 19 points in this competition, Fares Taher and Sinan Nashashibi 18 points.

In the hit and run single's competition Egyptian Adham Masri overcame 12 hurdles without a single mistake. Jordan's Bisharat participated with two entries and had four faults as did teammates Sinan Nashashibi and Shereen Rasekh.

The results were not immediately released because of a computer failure.

Forty five participants from Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait and Syria are taking part in the championship celebrating the National Day of Syria.

Jordan's national equestrian team arrived in Damascus Tuesday with six participants taking part in the four-day event.

Egypt's 16-member team is the largest delegation headed by Adam Hamad who will also take part in the Qatar International Horse Festival.

Jordan's team consists of Hani Bisharat, Sinan Nashashibi, Fares Taher, Ibrahim Bisharat, Suzan Al Bakheet, Shereen Al Rasekh and Saed Kilani.

## Jordan's Al Saoud 20th in Qatar's horse endurance race

By Lutfi Zu'bi in Doha  
and Roufan Nahhas  
in Amman

SHEIKH HAMAD Ben Abdullah's Fares finished first in 4th Horse Endurance Race early Friday covering 42 kilometres of desert terrain at the 6th Qatar International Horse Festival.

Jabal Ali owned by Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashid Al Maktoum was second and Las Scrap owned by Sheikh Hamad Ben Abdullah Al Thani came in third.

Twelve Jordanian horses took part in the race which started at 6 a.m. at Ras

Laffan to reach the finish line east of the city of Ruweis.

Jordan's Mohammed Al Saleh dropped out of the race after the first stage because of his horse's irregular heartbeat. The Kingdom's only participant to finish the race was Salameh Al Saoud riding Saed Al Saoud who finished twentieth.

The competition offers total prize money of \$200,000.

Several international news agencies from Europe and the Arab World covered the race.

Six horses owned by the Royal Jordanian Stables

will take part in the three-day horse show starting Saturday.

Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bim Al Hussein, president of the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation, heads the Kingdom's delegation to the Qatar horse festival in which eighteen Jordanian horses are taking part in the different events including the Endurance Race, the horse racing competition and the horse show.

## Olajuwon leads Rockets; Cavaliers, Nuggets lose

HOUSTON (AP) — Hakeem Olajuwon scored 26 points and led Houston's late fourth-quarter charge to give the Rockets a 96-90 victory over Washington Thursday night, snapping the Bullets' five-game road winning streak.

After the Bullets took their first lead of the game, 82-81, with 7:29 to play, Olajuwon scored eight points over the final 6:42. The Bullets scored just two baskets over the final three minutes, missing their final three shots.

Clyde Drexler hit 4 of 9 3-pointers and finished with 19 points. Willis added 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Rod Strickland led Washington with 21 points and 10 assists.

Supersonics 123, Nuggets 97

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp had 24 points and 10 rebounds and Seattle's pressure defence forced Denver into a season-high 33 turnovers in the Supersonics' rout of the Nuggets.

Hersey Hawkins had 23 points on 9-of-11 shooting as five Sonics scored in double figures. Laphonso Ellis paced the Nuggets with 20 points.

Sonics centre Jim McIlvaine capped Seattle's one-sided victory with his first career 3-pointer. The Nuggets set a franchise record with 16 3-pointers in 31 attempts.

Spurs 113, Suns 106

In Phoenix, Danny Manning scored 10 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter to lead Phoenix to its sixth victory in eight games.

Kevin Johnson added 24 points and 15 assists and John "Hot Rod" Williams chipped in 13 points and 14 rebounds as the Suns moved into a tie with the Sacramento Kings for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Cory Alexander scored a career-high 26 points and Vernon Maxwell also had 26 to lead the Spurs, who dropped their third straight.

Trail Blazers 97, Bucks 78

In Milwaukee, Clifford Robinson and Rasheed Wallace each scored 20 points as Portland won its league-best 11th straight game.

Vin Baker led the Bucks with 26 points and 10 rebounds. Glenn Robinson added 16 points.

Portland's longest winning streak is 16 games, set between March 20 and April 19, 1991.

The Blazers shot 61 per cent from the floor and took control by outscoring the Bucks 32-15 in the third quarter.

Magic 100, Warriors 95

In Orlando, Florida, Dennis Scott's sixth 3-pointer gave Orlando the lead for good and the Magic held on to beat Golden State.

Scott, who finished with 21 points, broke a 95-95 tie with 25.6 seconds remaining. Rony Seikaly made two free throws to complete a 28-point performance.

Joe Smith led Golden State with 24 points.

Lakers 89, Cavaliers 76

In Cleveland, Eddie Jones scored 25 points and backcourt partner Nick Van Exel had 22 to lead the Los Angeles Lakers over the Cavaliers. It was the Lakers' first triumph in eight games in Cleveland since Dec. 13, 1988.

Bobby Phillips' season-high 27 points led Cleveland, which used a 10-4 run at the outset of the third quarter to tie the score 43-43.

Phillips took his only rest of the night for 42 seconds mid-way through the quarter and the Lakers promptly scored eight straight points to take the lead for good at 57-49.

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Interested parties are asked to contact the Canadian Embassy at the Pearl of Shmeisani Building (4th Floor) Shmeisani, Amman between the hours of 10:00 and 15:00 to obtain a free copy of a briefing document explaining the basic requirements expected for the new Villa.  
Expressions of interest should be received at the Canadian Embassy by no later than 15:00 on the 27th day of March, 1997.

## Beckenbauer turns down FIFA candidature

STOCKHOLM (AFP) —

German footballing great Franz Beckenbauer announced on Swedish television here on Thursday evening that he would not be a candidate to succeed FIFA President Joao Havelange, who retires after next year's World Cup finals in France.

"I have decided not to be a candidate for the post of FIFA president," Beckenbauer said, after meeting with the favourite for the job UEFA's Swedish president Lennart Johansson in Geneva.

"I think it would be better for Europe if there was only one candidate as otherwise it would split our vote," the 51-year-old German added.

Beckenbauer's decision will be bad news for the 80-year-old Havelange as he had expressed his preference for Beckenbauer as a prospective candidate.

For Johansson though it

paves the way for his challenge for the post in 1998.

"This is great news but I never really expected Franz Beckenbauer to stand anyway," Johansson said.

Havelange, in his post for the last 23 years, announced last December he would not stand for another term.

However, he is known to not enjoy close relations with Lennart Johansson, the president of UEFA, who is the leading candidate at the moment, despite his tendency to commit gaffes.

"He is the only candidate at the moment," was the lukewarm response by Havelange to Johansson's candidacy.

Havelange, though, was effusive in February about Beckenbauer, currently president of UEFA Cup holders Bayern Munich, standing as a candidate.

"Beckenbauer was a great player, a wonderful coach, a successful businessman and

president of one of the great footballing powers in Europe. So why shouldn't he be a candidate as he has all the requirements to do the job," Havelange told AFP.

Havelange's enthusiastic support for Beckenbauer has been echoed by one of the Brazilian autocrat's bitterest enemy's Pele, the former Brazilian master and minister of sport.

Havelange also confirmed that he would not reconsider standing again even if the candidates to replace him did not meet with his approval.

"I took this decision after a lot of thought. Despite my good health, both physically and financially, I will be 82 in 1998 and one just doesn't know at that age what might happen. One's star can suddenly decline," Havelange said.



Canada's Elvis Stojko is airborne during his winning performance in the men's free programme at the World Figure Skating Championships in Lausanne. Stojko adds this world title to his 1994 and 1995 victories (Reuters photo)

## Prominent coach dies during World Championships

LAUSANNE (R) —

Respected Italian figure skating coach Carlo Fassi died of a heart attack during the World Championships on Thursday, an International Skating Union (ISU) spokesperson said. He was 67.

Fassi complained of stomach pains at the rink late on Thursday morning and at noon was taken to hospital where he died later, U.S. team spokesperson Heather Linhart said.

Fassi coached U.S. Women's skater Nicole

Bobek, whose event started Friday, but one of his most famous pupils was Britain's 1980 Olympic men's champion Robin Cousins.

Cousins was in tears at bearing of the death of the man who coached him from 1977 until after his Olympic triumph.

"He was one of the great coaches. He didn't have a magic wand and didn't click with everyone. But he had a passion and drive," said Cousins, now a television commentator.

"He had the unique ability to make everyone feel they were the best, whether it was a novice or someone like myself trying to be an Olympic champion," Cousins added.

The Italian, who was based in Lake Arrowhead, California, where he was assisted in his coaching by his wife Christa, was the European men's figure skating champion in 1953 and 1954.

He sprang to prominence as a coach when he trained American Peggy Fleming to the world titles from 1966 to 1968 and to the 1968 Olympic title.

He also coached both the 1976 Olympic gold medalists, John Curry of Britain and American Dorothy Hamill.

He is survived by his wife, their two sons and a daughter.

## Netherlands Embassy Moves to New Premises

The Royal Netherlands Embassy will move to its permanent premises at Jabal Amman, 4th Circle Intersection (Al-Ameer Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein Square), opposite the Prime Ministry. Therefore the Embassy will be closed from Sunday, March 23rd through Wednesday March 26th, 1997.

The Embassy will resume its operations in its new premises on Thursday, March 27th, 1997.

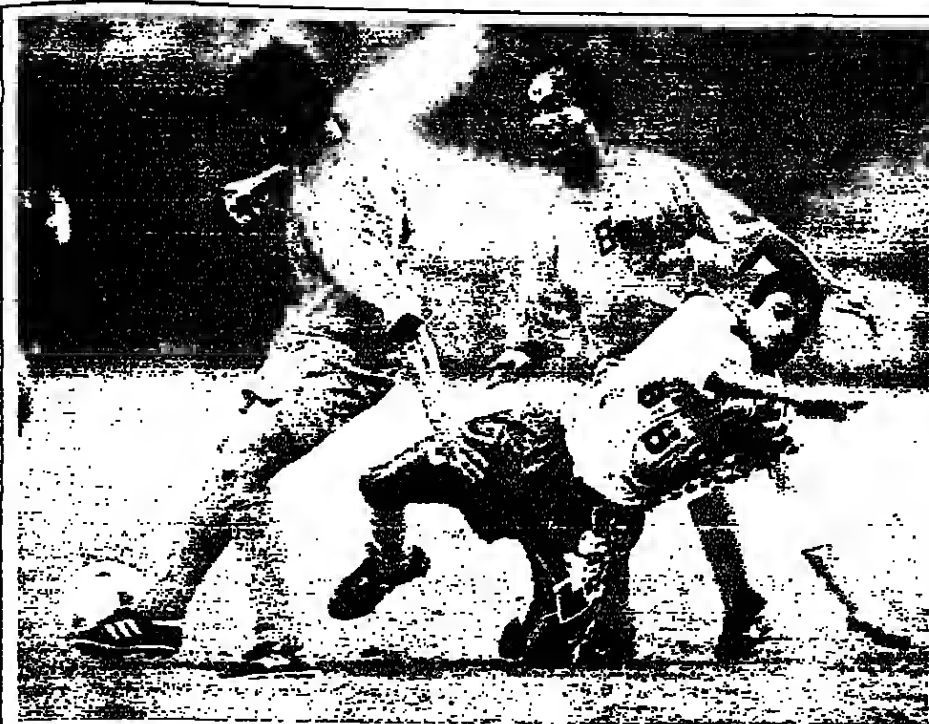
The new telephone numbers of the Embassy will be:  
**691525/ 694089/ 693581.**

The fax numbers will be:  
**692214 (consular section) and 694161.**

The Embassy will be open from Sunday till Thursday. The office hours of the consular section are from 09:00 till 12:00 hrs.

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	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30			





Mohd Masud Rana (L) of Bangladesh steals the ball after tackling Ibrahim Harbi (R) of Saudi Arabia, as his team mate Mohd Nurul Haque looks on, during the World Cup 1998 Asia qualifying match at Shah Alam Stadium in Malaysia. The match ended with Saudi Arabia beating Bangladesh with a score of 4-1 (Reuters photo)

## Romanian champion tests positive

BUCHAREST (R) — Romanian junior world champion Andrea Burlacu has failed a doping test, the Romanian Athletics Federation said on Friday.

"Burlacu was found positive earlier in March with metandienon metabolite," the federation said in a statement.

Any sanction will depend on the findings from the second sample. Burlacu, 20, risks a two-year ban if the second sample is positive.

She won the 400 metres at the 1996 junior world championships in Sydney.

## Arab Clubs Basketball Championship Jazireh play for 9-16th places

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S AL JAZIREH will play for 9-16th places at the second round of the 11th Arab Clubs Basketball Championship starts in Nabel, Tunisia Friday.

Al Jazireh could not qualify for the quarterfinals after losing 67-65 to Lebanon's Al Hikmah Wednesday evening after a first half 31-27 lead.

Despite their defeat, the result against the Lebanese team is undoubtedly a positive one taking into consideration that Al Hikmah, regarded as one of the competition's top teams, boast one of the strongest lineups with professional players.

Al Hikmah also lost their qualifying chances after losing 64-62 to Algeria's Bofariq and 79-68 to Tunisia's Al Zahra who are now considered title favourites.

Al Jazireh's first round matches included an opening 79-71 loss to Algeria's Bofariq after coming back from a 17-point gap.

They later lost 92-60 to Tunisian champions Al Zahra in which Al Jazireh played one of their worst matches and lost the efforts of key players Yousef Abu Bakr and Ma'an Odeh when they collided head on and had to be stitched up.

Playing for 9-16th places with Al Jazireh will be Kuwait's Al Jahra, Libya's Murouj, Algeria's Bina, and Lebanon's Al Hikmah.

Making their inaugural Arab Championship participation, Al Jazireh's mostly under-22 players joined teams from nine Arab Countries in the event hosted by Al Mal'ab Al Nabli.

The participating 16 men's teams had been divided into four groups with the two in each group moving to the quarterfinals to play for 1-8th places.

Teams include Al Mal'ab (Tunisia), Al Riyadi (Lebanon), Al Zahra (Tunisia), Bofariq (Algeria), Zamalek (Egypt), Al Itihad (Tunisia), Al Itihad (Saudi Arabia), Al Wadi (Tunisia), Al Itihad (Egypt), Al Nasr (Libya), Ohud (Saudi Arabia).

Only six teams are taking part in the 7th Women's

Championship. They include hosts Al Hilal, Al Safa' and Al Mal'ab of Tunisia, Egypt's Al Ahli, Hussein Dai of Algeria, and Lebanon's Homenetmen.

The championship organisers have allocated prizes for top scorer, best player, ideal team in addition to best three-point scorer.

In previous Arab Championships, Jordan's former First Division champions Al Ahli and reigning champs Al Orthodoxy represented Jordan but declined to participate this year citing preparations for the country's first Division Championship.

Titleholders Al Orthodoxy, the country's undisputed basketball powerhouse from 1976-1989, have now won back the title in the past two seasons and repeating that is a top priority.

They started the season by winning the Under-22 championship title last month.

On the other hand, Al Ahli are hoping to regain their title which they won in 90, 92, 93 and 94 and have just recruited Armenian coach Raffi Chiolukyan, who was in charge of the Russian team at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Chiolukyan, who was former head coach of the Soviet Union's teams had led the 1973 team to the European Women's Championship.

Third-ranked Al Jazireh hope that the Arab championship will provide the team with a chance to test their readiness for the First Division Championship which they will try to win for the first time in their history.

Although they started the season on a sour note losing their two-year U-22 reign, they beat Syria's Al Jish and Al Itihad in friendly matches last month.

They have an improved team, well known for their unyielding, competitive spirit which has enabled them to become serious contenders in the Kingdom's First Division Championship for the past two years.

In the last competition they beat Al Ahli and had a sure shot at second if not first place but later faltered in the final round.

## Sampras concentrates on tennis after breakup

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP) — World No.1 Pete Sampras has thrown himself into playing tennis since breaking up with his girlfriend of six years who she proposed marriage.

The result has been the best start of any year in his career and an overwhelming favourite's role at the \$2.45 million Lipton Championships that began here on Thursday.

The 25-year-old Sampras split from childhood sweetheart Delaina Mulcahy three months ago and now lives alone in Tampa, his life as uncluttered and free of complications off the court as it has been when using his racket.

"I'm fine. There is nothing to talk about," Sampras said of his breakup. "That is part of life."

Sampras won his first 20 matches of the year, taking the Australian Open for his ninth Grand Slam triumph and two other titles until losing to Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech republic at the Champions Cup last week.

"It wasn't too good at Indian Wells," Sampras said. "I didn't play well. It's nice to be back here where I have won before. I have the confidence I can do it again."

Romania's Adrian Panait advanced to a second-round match Friday against Sampras when Mariano Zabaleta was disqualified in a third-set tiebreaker.



Pete Sampras

Voinea won 5-7, 7-5, 6-6 (1/2) when Zabaleta slammed a ball in frustration and it struck a linesman, prompting the referee to disqualify the Argentine player.

Sampras took the title here in 1993 and 1994. Andre Agassi has won the past two Lipton crowns but

he completes a 1997 sweep.

That means winning the French Open, a prize that has so far escaped him.

"I don't have any doubt he will break Emerson's record," said Tony Roche, an Aussie contemporary of Emerson. "But obviously, to be considered the best he has to win the French."

Sampras knows that while winning titles such as the Lipton will boost his winnings, history is written at major events.

"It's nice to make money, but ultimately how you do at Grand Slams and year-end rankings are the things that really count," Sampras said.

"I feel there are still a good four or five years where I can continue to stay on top and be in contention at majors."

Australia's Jason Stoltenberg reached a Friday showdown with Spain's Sergi Bruguera by beating American Jim Grabb 6-3, 6-2, and Czech Martin Damm beat Carlos Costa 6-1, 5-7, 6-4. Damm now faces powerful Aussie Mark Philippoussis.

Zimbabwe's Byron Black beat Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi 6-2, 6-3, to set up a second-round meeting with fourth seed Goran Ivanisevic.

Third-seed Michael Chang meets fellow-American Mark Merklein, a qualifier who defeated South Africa's Neville Godwin 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

## Schumacher aims for Brazilian podium

MONZA (AFP) — Michael Schumacher is targeting another podium finish at the Brazilian Grand Prix, after his Ferrari dipped below Damon Hill's track record here in practice.

Schumacher clocked 1min 24.134sec for his lap in Thursday's private session, fractionally inside the 1:24.204 set by the English world champion in practice for last September's Italian Grand Prix.

Schumacher was enthusiastic about the Ferrari's progress after a tricky start to pre-season testing.

"We will be in better condition than we were last year in Brazil, which was a disastrous trip," said the former double world champion.

"It's going to be a difficult track at Interlagos next week, with a mixture of fast and slow speeds, and a bumpy surface — it'll be hard to find the right balance for the car."

"But I feel confident and I'm aiming for the podium," he said.

Schumacher came second



Michael Schumacher behind the wheels of his Ferrari (file photo)

behind Scotland's David Coulthard in the season opening Australian Grand Prix after both the Williams favourites, Jacques Villeneuve and Heinz Harald Frentzen, failed to

finish. Ferrari teammate Eddie Irvine agreed with Schumacher's analysis.

"The car seems much better than last year, and it seems even better here at

Monza than it did in Australia," said the Ulsterman.

Irvine was testing the Goodyear tyres during his session, but still delivered a best time of 1:24.598.

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## Fujimori vows not to free guerrilla prisoners

LIMA (R) — Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori has vehemently denied that his government would free jailed Marxist rebels in a deal to end the 93-day-old hostage standoff at the Japanese ambassador's house in Lima.

"I absolutely, totally and flatly deny that my government's position has changed," said Mr. Fujimori, referring to reports he might be willing to free some Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) detainees in order to end the siege.

"My government's position remains the same. There will be no freeing of MRTA prisoners," he said on local broadcaster Radioprogramas Del Peru in an interview from the central Andes.

Some news reports have said Mr. Fujimori agreed at a meeting last week with Japan's Vice-Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura to free MRTA prisoners to win the release of 72 dignitaries being held by about 20 heavily armed MRTA rebels.

The MRTA has demanded release of about 450 of their comrades from Peru jails in exchange for freeing the hostages, who have been held captive in the Japanese residence since Dec. 17. Mr. Fujimori has consistently rejected the demand but signalled he may be flexible in other areas.

"The security of the country comes before any other interest. I'm sorry if that sounds hard," said Mr. Fujimori, in his first statements about the crisis since

Mr. Komura's visit.

In a sign of progress toward ending the siege peacefully, Cuba confirmed on Thursday that it had accepted a request from Japan to grant asylum to the hostage-takers if that would contribute to ending the crisis and if all sides agreed.

In Havana, the ruling Communist Party newspaper Granma said Mr. Komura delivered Japan's formal request in a meeting late on Wednesday with President Fidel Castro.

"The Cuban government ratified its willingness to cooperate where possible in the solution to the situation, on the basis of an agreement between the involved parties," Granma said.

An MRTA spokesman said on Thursday the group had no comment on the asylum request — a possibly significant change, since the movement in the past has poured cold water on the idea of asylum in a third country in exchange for freeing the hostages.

"For the moment we have no statement on that issue," an MRTA spokesman inside the besieged house said in a radio communication with reporters when asked about Cuban asylum.

Earlier in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said he hoped the request to Mr. Castro would "accelerate moves to seek an early solution" to the siege, in which Tokyo's ambassador to Lima and some two dozen Japanese businessmen are captive.

Mr. Fujimori, whose popularity has rested largely on his tough line with guerrilla

las, said any release of MRTA prisoners would set a dangerous precedent for a country ravaged by violence since 1980 by MRTA and a Maoist group, the Shining Path.

"We cannot backslide here because this may generate other cases in which I am asked to free prisoners, including other terrorist groups or common criminals," said Mr. Fujimori.

"Perhaps for other countries, this might not have so much meaning and they may seek solutions that don't take this into account, but we Peruvians have suffered for 15 years and we've had 25,000 deaths," he said.

As a three-man mediation panel has been talking with both sides, Mr. Fujimori's army said last week it arrested 38 "MRTA terrorists" and seized weapons in sweeps through rebel strongholds in the eastern Andean foothills.

The MRTA spokesman denied that the 38 detainees belonged to the organisation, however, calling them "defenceless peasants" picked up in "arbitrary and indiscriminate" roundups.

But while criticising the army sweeps, he signalled MRTA remained willing to keep negotiating on the hostages and that the army offensive need not pose an unsurmountable obstacle.

"We ratify our willingness to continue the dialogue, but we are not prepared to allow that these repressive measures continue to be taken without national and international public opinion knowing about them," said the spokesman.



Police investigators examine the body of a man identified as a Palestinian suicide bomber as it lies in the "A Propo" cafe in Tel Aviv on Friday (AFP photo)

## Hamas leader calls for 'holy warriors' with explosives to liberate Jerusalem

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — A Hamas leader recently freed from Palestinian prison called for "holy warriors" bearing explosives to free Jerusalem, hours after a suicide bomber killed three people in a Tel Aviv cafe.

"Nothing can stop Israel except holy warriors carrying explosives on their bodies to destroy the enemies of God," Ibrahim Mukadmeb said in a speech before thousands of Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) backers at a rally in the Gaza refugee camp Khan Yunis.

"No slogans or shouts or negotiations will liberate Jerusalem, only holy war. The lions must be released from Palestinian prisons," he said, referring to Hamas and other hardliners arrested by Palestinian self-rule police.

"We must make (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu curse the day his mother bore him and wish that Jerusalem had fallen into the sea," Mr. Mukadmeb said.

His talks before 3,000 Hamas supporters came only hours after a bomb ripped apart a crowded cafe in Tel Aviv, killing three people and injuring more than 40, but Mr. Mukadmeb did not refer directly to the Tel Aviv attack.

Mr. Mukadmeb, a leader of the Hamas military wing, was released by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat earlier this month after serving a year in prison for involvement in a series of Hamas suicide bombings conducted in February and March, 1996, which killed 46 people.

Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday called Mr. Mukadmeb "one of the worst terrorists on earth."

He said that by releasing Mr. Mukadmeb, Mr. Arafat had "given the green light for terrorists to go ahead with bus bombings, suicide attacks and mass murder."

Mr. Netanyahu repeated the charge after Friday's bombing, and said he held the Palestinian leader responsible for the killing.

"It is obvious that (Mukadmeb) and others' release could encourage attacks," he said.

Meanwhile, thousands of Palestinians marched through Nablus on the West Bank, in a protest which included a large number of Hamas supporters.

"This is the only language Israel understands, the language of martyrs," said Sheikh Hamad Bitawi, a figure close to Hamas, in a speech to the crowd about the Tel Aviv bombing.

The crowd carried the green banners of Hamas and a huge banner with the picture of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the aged spiritual leader of the group who is currently in an Israeli prison.

But most speakers at the assembly spoke of stopping negotiations with Israel, with no direct calls for armed attacks.

Both demonstrations had been planned days before the Tel Aviv bombing occurred and were organised to protest the start of construction of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

## Lebanon to deport Red Army suspects — report

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese authorities have promised to extradite to Japan five members of the outlawed Japanese Red Army arrested last month and sought by Tokyo, the Arabic newspaper Al Hayat reported Friday.

According to the London-based newspaper, which cited senior diplomatic sources in Damascus, "Japan has received a promise from Beirut to hand over the five Japanese Red Army members."

Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, has approved the extradition, the paper added.

Lebanese officials refused all comment Friday on the report.

The five suspected Red Army members were arrested in Beirut on Feb. 15 and indicted by a Lebanese court early this month for possession of false documents.

But Lebanese authorities have not charged them with any offences relating to their membership in the Japanese Red Army, which carried out a string of deadly attacks in the 1970s.

Japanese diplomats in Beirut said an official extradition request has been made, but Tokyo has made it clear that it wants the five Japanese nationals returned home.

One of those arrested was quoted as saying earlier this week that the five will commit suicide if the Lebanese authorities agree to extradite them to Japan.

"If the Lebanese government takes such a decision we will kill ourselves in our cells to protect our comrades," Masao Adashi told a new Lebanese newspaper, Al Kifah Al Arabi, in an interview published Monday.

Adashi, 57, and three other suspected members of the Japanese Red Army, Kazuo Tohira, 44, Haro Wako, 48, and Kozo Okamoto, 49, were interviewed at the Rumieh central prison on the outskirts of Beirut.

Okamoto is the only survivor of the commando team which attacked Lod Airport in Tel Aviv in 1972, killing 26 people.

The other suspect and only woman, Mariko Yamamoto, 57, was not present. She is being held elsewhere in Beirut.

They have been charged with illegal residency and falsifying documents, charges that carry between three and seven years in prison.

## Frenchwoman stamps mark revolution

PARIS (AFP) — The French post office has unveiled a new version of Marianne, the national symbol who adorns French stamps — and for the first time ever she is the work of a woman artist.

The new stamp, to be introduced on Bastille Day, July 14, replaces the existing version introduced to mark the bicentenary of the French revolution in 1989. Designer and painter Eve Luquet submitted her new Marianne, who will be the 13th version to grace the front of letters from France worldwide, to a competition organised by the post office.

Her image shows a long-haired woman with a full mouth and strong nose, allegedly to symbolise a "young and dynamic" France, according to the French post and telecommunications ministry. It shows France's place to Europe she is set against a background of European Union stars, three of which form the dots on the 'i's of the French republican motto "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite."

Artist gets big Australian portrait prize

SYDNEY (AFP) — Local artist Nigel Thomson won the coveted Archibald Prize for Portraiture worth 35,000 Australian dollars (US\$27,600) here Friday with a painting of a blind writer.

The subject of Thomson's rather bleak canvas was Barbara Blackman, who was formerly married to leading Australian painter Charles Blackman. Thomson, 51, who lives in Manly on Sydney's northern beaches, has won six art prizes, including the Archibald in 1983. He produced a striking work with Blackman's blue eyes staring out of the canvas.

"I started with the idea of blindness and how does an artist convey blindness," he told reporters. The painting was a representation of the loneliness and the isolation of blindness. Thomson said. The Archibald prize, which has often been the centre of controversy, attracted 482 submissions this year with 31 works selected for exhibition in the New South Wales art gallery.

Truman was Brinkley's favourite

TOLEDO (AP) — David Brinkley says that of the 11 U.S. Presidents he covered in 33 years as a newsman, his favourite was Harry Truman. "He was the most honest man I have ever known. For a politician, that's saying a lot," Brinkley told about 700 people at a charity benefit Wednesday. And Brinkley made it plain that he does not think much of President Bill Clinton, although he said he did not intend to call Clinton "a bore" on national television on election night. "It was late at night. We were all tired. Bill Clinton came on to make his victory statement. He went on and on. It was all the same stuff we'd heard in the campaign. It was boring. I thought the microphone was off. It wasn't," Brinkley said. When he went to the White House to apologise, "I said I was sorry I was not polite to him. I didn't take back anything I said," Brinkley said. Brinkley also told of playing poker with Truman and Winston Churchill en route to Fulton, Missouri, where Churchill gave his famous "iron curtain" speech in 1946. "But after we'd been playing for a while, it was evident Churchill didn't know the game very well," Brinkley said. "When Churchill excused himself to go to the bathroom, Truman said to the rest of us: 'This man saved the free world. Lose.' So the rest of the night, we were folding with flushes and three of a kind."

## Russia, Iraq sign oil deal in defiance of sanctions

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq and Russia on Friday concluded an oil agreement valued at nearly \$3.5 billion that will be implemented despite the six-year-old U.N. embargo on Baghdad. Russian Energy Minister Pyotr Rodionov said.

The agreement, which will run for 23 years from the date of its approval is related to phase two of the development of the Qurnah oilfield in southern Iraq.

Mr. Rodionov told reporters: "The agreement will be implemented independently of the lifting of economic sanctions" imposed after Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. "The accord will be implemented immediately after the two countries' governments and parliaments approve it and after they exchange documents of approval," he added.

Russia has been working to get the United Nations to lift the embargo on Iraq which has been partially eased in an oil-for-food deal in December.

Iraq was a major Soviet trading partner and owes Russia \$10 to \$16 billion. Friday's agreement was the first of its type between Iraq

and a foreign country since the embargo went into effect, although Iraq has begun negotiations in recent years with several foreign companies specialised in developing oil deposits. However, no formal contracts were concluded.

Mr. Rodionov and Iraqi oil minister General Amer Mohammad Rasheed co-chair a joint cooperation committee. Gen. Rashid told reporters there is an estimated "seven to eight billion barrels of reserves for the second phase of the Qurnah oil field with daily production of close to 600,000 barrels." Iraq expects to earn receipts of more than \$70 billion over the 23-year contract period, he said.

"It's a vast strategic contract... which bears witness to the friendly strategic ties between Iraq and Russia, the general said adding that the two countries sincerely wish to promote bilateral cooperation.

The first phase of the field's development was carried out by the Soviet Union during the early 70s, after the nationalisation of Iraq's oil industry.

Iraq's proven crude

reserves are more than 110 billion barrels. Baghdad and Moscow concluded an agreement Thursday creating a joint oil drilling venture at the end of their second committee meeting. The first committee meeting was held in Moscow in 1994. The committee meeting also resulted in the signing of a scientific and cultural cooperation agreement and the signing of minutes on oil and industrial cooperations especially in the hydrocarbon field.

Iraqi oil experts recently asserted that the country's total oil reserves were more than 300 billion barrels, a claim not independently confirmed.

If proved true, the reserves would place Iraq above Saudi Arabia, which has proven oil reserves of 260 billion barrels. Several Russian companies have signed agreements with the Iraqi government under Baghdad's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

The agreements cover more than 25 million barrels of oil, according to reports in the Iraqi press.

## Euro-MPs call on Turkey to improve its record of respect for human rights

ANKARA (AFP) — A group of visiting European Parliament members on Friday called on Turkey to improve its human rights record for better ties with the European Union (EU).

"What Turkey needs is reforms in human rights and democracy, and Europe wants to see that these reforms are carried out," said Pauline Green, head of the Socialist group in the European Parliament.

"We are ready to support those reforms for the welfare of the Turkish people and the improvement of relations with Europe," Ms. Green said at a meeting with a left-wing opposition leader, according to the Anatolia news agency.

Ms. Green, four of her socialist colleagues and Gijis

De Vries, head of the Liberal group in the Euro-parliament, arrived in Turkey on Thursday.

Ms. Green and Mr. De Vries on Friday had talks with State Minister Abdullah Gul, a top aide to Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, and were expected to meet Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller.

Mrs. Ciller said last week that Turkey would take measures to prevent alleged police torture and amend its laws for more human rights.

The European Union on Sunday assured Turkey that it would assess Ankara's membership application on the same basis it would use for other candidate countries.

"Turkey is... recognised as having a European future and will be judged on the same

basis as other countries," Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo said after an EU foreign ministers meeting in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands.

Mr. van Mierlo said many problems still remained between Turkey and the European Union but that earlier agreements with Ankara were still valid.

The EU's Apeldoorn meeting came in the wake of remarks by Western Europe's Christian Democrat and conservative parties in early March, which ruled out Muslim Turkey's future membership to the union due to economic, political and cultural reasons.

"For the socialist group, religion and culture are matters not related to EU membership," Ms. Green said, according to Anatolia.

## U.N. inspectors due in Iraq next week; first food trucks under oil deal arrives

BAGHDAD (AFP) — United Nations chemical arms experts are due in Iraq next week as part of their ongoing mission to determine whether Baghdad has destroyed all such weapons and production facilities, a U.N. official said Thursday.

"We are expecting a team of chemical weapons experts to arrive on March 27 for a mission of several days in Iraq," Roger Knight, the deputy director of the U.N. monitoring centre in Baghdad, told AFP.

He also said that the head of the United Nations Special Commission on disarming Iraq (UNSCOM), Rolf Ekeus, was expected in Iraq in early April.

The former Swedish diplomat visits Iraq about every two months to verify whether Baghdad has complied with all U.N. disarmament resolutions.

Mr. Ekeus said earlier this month that Iraq had admitted to holding 3,800 kilograms of deadly nerve agents.

Under U.N. resolutions imposed in 1991 following the end of the Gulf war, Iraq

must destroy all its weapons of mass destruction and cooperate fully with inspectors before crippling economic sanctions can be lifted.

The U.N. Security Council decided on March 3 to maintain six-and-a-half-year-old international sanctions against Iraq.

### Food trucks arrive

Trucks entered Iraq on Thursday with the first food supplies Baghdad has been clamoring for since it resumed oil exports in December under a humanitarian deal with the United Nations, U.N. officials said.

A convoy crossed into northern Iraq from Turkey carrying chick peas, beans and vegetable oil under two contracts with Turkish firms approved by the U.N. Sanctions Committee, the officials said.

Iraq did not announce the trucks' arrival, but the official Al Thawra newspaper said the first large food shipment — 13,000 tonnes of Thai rice — was due to arrive in the Gulf port of

Umm Qasr in the next few days.

Baghdad has complained the U.N. committee has been slow to approve food and medicine contracts since it resumed oil exports on Dec. 10 under the first easing of the sanctions which were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

In New York, a U.N. spokesman said Tuesday the Sanctions Committee had approved 45 food and medicine contracts, while 19 other contracts were pending and 11 were on hold.

The United Nations has so far received 324 applications to send food and medical supplies to Iraq's 20 million people who U.N. officials report are dangerously undernourished and lacking proper medical care.

Under the humanitarian deal, Iraq can export \$2 billion of oil in six months to pay for food and medicine as well as defray U.N. costs and compensate victims of the Iraqi invasion.

Iraqi officials said the oil and trade sanctions as well as freeze on overseas assets

deprive the government of the revenues needed to feed and care for its people.

Under the two contracts with the Turkish firms, 10,000 tonnes of vegetable oil, 6,000 tonnes of beans and 2,000 tonnes of chick peas will be delivered. U.N. officials said.

Around half of the 151 international experts tasked with monitoring the distribution of the food and medicine have arrived in Iraq, while 14 experts are monitoring oil exports from terminals in the Gulf and Kirkuk.

U.N. officials said distribution was not likely to begin until May when sufficient quantities had arrived, but Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Salah said distribution would begin as soon as the goods enter the country.

It took months of arduous negotiations before the United Nations gave the green light for the deal in December. amid U.S. fears that the Iraqi regime might siphon off the oil proceeds, diplomats in New York said.